

HARPER'S HANDY SERIES



Issued Weekly

Copyright, 1885,
by HARPER & BROTHERS

FEBRUARY 19, 1886

Subscription Price
per Year, 52 Numbers, \$15

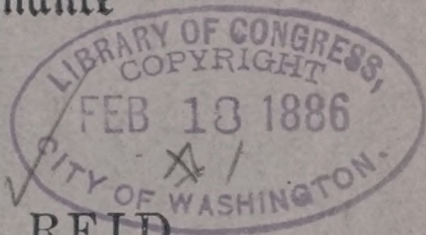
Entered at the Post-Office at New York, as Second-class Mail Matter

MAULEVERER'S MILLIONS

40

A Yorkshire Romance

BY T. WEMYSS REID



Books you may hold readily in your hand are the most useful, after all
DR. JOHNSON

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS


1886

HARPER'S HANDY SERIES.

Latest Issues.

NO.		CENTS.
22.	OLD-WORLD QUESTIONS AND NEW-WORLD ANSWERS. By Daniel Pidgeon, F.G.S., Assoc. Inst. C.E.....	25
23.	IN PERIL AND PRIVATION. By James Payn. Illustrated.....	25
24.	THE FLOWER OF DOOM, &c. By M. Betham-Edwards	25
25.	THE LUCK OF THE DARRELLS. A Novel. By James Payn.....	25
26.	HOUPLA. A Novelette. By John Strange Winter. Illustrated.	25
27.	SELF-DOOMED. A Novel. By B. L. Farjeon.....	25
28.	MALTHUS AND HIS WORK. By James Bonar, M.A.....	25
29.	THE DARK HOUSE. A Novel. By G. Manville Fenn.....	25
30.	THE GHOST'S TOUCH, and Other Stories. By Wilkie Collins.....	25
31.	THE ROYAL MAIL. By James Wilson Hyde. Illustrated.....	25
32.	THE SACRED NUGGET. A Novel. By B. L. Farjeon.....	25
33.	PRIMUS IN INDIS. A Romance. By M. J. Colquhoun	25
34.	MUSICAL HISTORY. By G. A. Macfarren.....	25
35.	IN QUARTERS WITH THE 25TH DRAGOONS. By J. S. Winter.....	25
36.	GOBLIN GOLD. A Novel. By May Crommelin	25
37.	THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES. By Prof. C. Witt. Translated by Frances Younghusband	25
38.	A BARREN TITLE. A Novel. By T. W. Speight.....	25
39.	US: AN OLD-FASHIONED STORY. By Mrs. Molesworth. Ill'd....	25
40.	OUNCES OF PREVENTION. By Titus Munson Coan, A.M., M.D....	25
41.	HALF-WAY. An Anglo-French Romance	25
42.	CHRISTMAS ANGEL. A Novel. By B. L. Farjeon. Illustrated...	25
43.	MRS. DYMOND. A Novel. By Miss Thackeray.....	25
44.	THE BACHELOR VICAR OF NEWFORTH. A Novel. By Mrs. J. Harcourt-Roe	25
45.	IN THE MIDDLE WATCH. A Novel. By W. Clark Russell.....	25
46.	TIRESIAS, AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred, Lord Tennyson	25
47.	LAST DAYS AT APSWICH. A Novel.....	25
48.	CABIN AND GONDOLA. By Charlotte Dunning.....	30
49.	LESTER'S SECRET. A Novel. By Mary Cecil Hay.....	30
50.	A MAN OF HONOR. A Novel. By J. S. Winter. Illustrated...	25
51.	STORIES OF PROVENÇE. From the French of Alphonse Daudet. By S. L. Lee.....	25
52.	'TWIXT LOVE AND DUTY. A Novel. By Tighe Hopkins.....	25
53.	A PLEA FOR THE CONSTITUTION, &c. By George Bancroft.....	25
54.	FORTUNE'S WHEEL. A Novel. By Alex. Innes Shand.....	25
55.	LORD BEACONSFIELD'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS SISTER — 1832-1852.....	25
56.	MAULEVERER'S MILLIONS. A Yorkshire Romance. By T. Wemyss Reid.....	25
57.	WHAT DOES HISTORY TEACH? Two Edinburgh Lectures. By John Stuart Blackie.....	25

Other volumes in preparation.

 HARPER & BROTHERS will send any of the above works by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States or Canada, on receipt of the price.

MAULEVERER'S MILLIONS.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE RAILWAY STATION.

It is not often that a man in looking back upon the story of his life can fix the precise moment at which his fate underwent a change that was destined to affect his whole future career. Sometimes, however, that turning-point when the current of one's existence was altered for the better or the worse stands out prominently among the every-day incidents of a life, and it is possible to say just when and where the great change was wrought that has made the man what he now is.

If any one were to ask me whether I could fix upon such a turning-point in my own career, my thoughts would instantly fly back to one hot day in the month of August, 187—, when I found myself the solitary occupant of a first-class railway carriage standing in the great station at York. I was looking out upon the bustling scene on that cheerful platform with not a little interest and amusement. Wearied by months of tedious work in London, I was on my way to Scarborough, for the purpose of recruiting my health, and

improving my spirits, depressed by a recent bereavement, in that famous pleasure resort. It seemed to me that here at York I was already feeling some of the benefits which the doctor had told me that a change of scene would bring in its train. The air, even in the railway station, was distinctly fresher than that which I had breathed a few hours before at King's Cross; and the men and women who were hurrying to and fro on the platform, in all the hot excitement of travellers at the height of the tourist season, were very different from the pale-faced jaded loungers I had left behind me in the streets of London.

It was my first visit to York since the erection of the palatial station which has taken the place of the little pink-roofed shed that so long sheltered the traveller as he paused on his flight to the north, and I was lost in admiration of the architectural magnificence of the new building. I was hardly conscious myself of my absorption in the scene before me, until I was startled by a voice at my very ear.

"Would you be kind enough to allow me to enter the carriage?"

It was a woman's voice, sweet and deep-toned, such as all men love to hear. The speaker was standing with her hand upon the handle of the door, which she had evidently been trying to open at the moment when my eyes were fixed in admiration upon the great span of the station roof. She was young and handsome, so much as that I saw at a glance; and she was dressed with singular elegance.

"I beg your pardon!" I cried in confusion, and I fear with a blush dyeing my cheeks and forehead; for I

was still young enough to be subject to that weakness. I hastily opened the door and stepped back.

The girl—for I now saw that she was little more—entered the carriage with some appearance of haste. She was accompanied by an unmistakable lady's-maid, of demure aspect, who was laden with the inevitable dressing-case, which she carried with a care that suggested the value of its contents. Her mistress turned to a porter who was in attendance laden with various small parcels, and giving him half-a-crown, said,

“The train is just going, I think?”

“Yes, miss, it only wants one minute to the time, thank you, miss, kindly;” touching his hat and pocketing his handsome *douceur*.

“Would you be kind enough—” said the young lady, then she looked at me for a moment, and I could have sworn there was a slight increase of color in her cheeks also. “Would you be kind enough to lock the door?” she resumed; but the porter was already out of ear-shot, and her request was not attended to. Giving up the attempt to arrest his attention as hopeless, she sank back into her seat with a little sigh, that might have been one either of satisfaction or uneasiness. There was something singularly attractive in her whole appearance. She had only been a few seconds in the carriage with me, and yet her presence seemed to pervade the whole apartment, and some subtle indefinable spring of joy in my own heart was touched at the thought that for an hour or more we were to be fellow-travellers.

I looked into her face as she sat with her eyes fixed upon the door. She had taken the seat furthest from

the platform, but I could see that she was watching the crowd in the station with an intentness that was surprising even to one ordinarily so unobservant as myself. Suddenly I beheld the most extraordinary change pass over the face, the beauty of which I was admiring perhaps more openly than I was aware. Every vestige of color faded out of it; even the rich full lips that had seemed made for smiles and bright conversation and kisses turned white, and long lines of care or terror were pencilled on the forehead. I followed the direction of her eyes, and saw that they were fixed upon a man who was looking into the carriage—a youngish man, with a handsome dissipated face, which spoke eloquently of a life of vicious self-indulgence, and a sneering insolent smile upon his lips, that told something of the heart that was beating in his breast.

He nodded familiarly to the girl, and then, with a sinister laugh of triumph, laid his hand upon the door.

“Oh, stop him, sir! stop him! For the love of heaven do not let him enter!”

I could hardly believe the evidence of my own ears, when I heard the voice in which she addressed me. Her tone had undergone as great a transformation as her features. If ever mortal terror was expressed by a voice, it was now in the harsh strained accents in which she spoke.

I did not wait to ask for any explanation. It was enough that she had appealed to me for aid. The young blood ran more rapidly through my veins. I felt rather than saw that she was appealing to me, not only with her voice, but with her beautiful eyes, her clasped hands, and the whole attitude of the figure, the symme-

try of which a moment before I had been admiring. I turned to the door, which the man was already trying to open as the train began to move slowly out of the station.

"You cannot get in here!" I said, holding the door hard against his attempt to open it. With a scowl upon his handsome evil face, he struck at me through the open window. Almost before I was conscious of the smart of the blow which had fallen upon my mouth, he was lying on his back on the platform, where, as the train, with increasing speed, proceeded on its journey, I could see a little group of officials and spectators quickly gather round his prostrate form.

It had all passed in a moment. I might have thought that it was only a dream, as the train went quickly over the railway bridge, and past the gray towers of the Minster, if it had not been for the undoubted presence of the lady and her attendant, and for the fact that my lip was bleeding where I had been struck. I was more excited than I appeared to be. Whilst I stanching the slight cut with my handkerchief, I looked towards the girl at whose bidding I had just struck a stranger to the ground. She was still white and trembling violently, and her maid was fumbling with the stopper of a bottle of scent. My own heart was beating quickly with the excitement of the strange encounter, but when I saw her pale face and manifest agitation, I felt that I must be calm for her sake.

I smiled and said, "You are not frightened, I hope. I was forced to strike him back after he struck me, but I do not think he was hurt."

"But you?" she said in a voice that shook as she spoke; "he has hurt you!"

“Oh, it is a mere trifle!” I cried, glad to have heard her speak again. “It is absolutely nothing. The fellow was certainly very rude in trying to enter the carriage when he knew he was not wanted. And it is necessary sometimes to give such people a lesson.”

I spoke with the bragging self-confidence of a boy who has just performed a feat of which he is rather proud. But I must do myself justice. My manner was assumed. In my heart I knew that I had acted in an inexcusable way in refusing to allow this stranger to enter a carriage in which there was ample room for him; and perhaps—for I am no hero—I had even some faint misgivings as to the consequences to myself if he should choose to take proceedings against me for assault. I had acted I knew upon the impulse of the moment. But I was not ordinarily so impulsive as I had been on this occasion. I should never have struck the man even after he had struck me, if it had not been for the cry of terror with which the girl had implored my protection against him.

“It was wrong of me,” she said now. “I ought never to have asked you to keep him out of the carriage. Oh, I am so sorry!”

She looked at me earnestly, and as she did so I saw with delight that the color was slowly coming back to her cheeks. I saw too that her eyes were of a dark brown that matched well the shade of her hair, whilst her voice was regaining something of the depth and mellow sweetness which had attracted me when she first spoke.

I tried to treat the whole affair as a joke; and, in part, I think I succeeded. As the girl recovered from the sudden fright and shock of the encounter, she re-

gained the composure of manner which had distinguished her when she entered the carriage, and by and by she smiled, and gave me fresh subject for wonder and admiration as I contrasted the deep color of her lips with the pearly whiteness of her teeth.

But I confess that I was somewhat piqued when I found that although unmistakably grateful to me for the assistance I had rendered her, she showed no disposition to take me into her confidence. Amid her repeated inquiries as to whether I still felt the smart of the cut on my lip, and her renewed expressions of gratitude, she gave me no hint as to her reason for desiring to avoid the companionship of the man with whom I had, on her account, been brought into such unpleasant personal relations, nor did she make her own identity in any way known to me.

Yet if this reserve made me feel rather indignant, that feeling was lost in the sense of pleasure with which I sat beside her. Never before, I thought, had I met with a woman so beautiful. And as we changed the conversation, both manifestly trying to get rid of the memory of the scene at the railway-station, and talked on other and more pleasant topics, I quickly came to the conclusion that she was as sympathetic as she was lovely. It is not a long journey, as my readers probably know, from York to Scarborough. In less than an hour and a half we had reached our destination. But long before we came in sight of Oliver's Mount I felt towards this beautiful young girl, with the splendid figure, the lovely eyes, the rich complexion, and the smile that was frankness itself, as I had never felt towards any woman before in my lonely and uneventful life.

"Ah, so we have reached Scarborough," she said. "How quickly the journey has passed! Do you know the place? It is my first visit to it. Perhaps"—and she blushed as she spoke—"we may see each other again some day. But I do not know." Her voice I thought grew sad as she uttered these last words; and a delicate veil of reserve seemed to pass over the beautiful face into which I was gazing now with an admiration and interest which I made no attempt to conceal.

"I hope so," I said eagerly. "I shall be staying at the Grand Hotel; and everybody here must constantly meet upon the parade at the saloon."

I hoped that she would mention her name, or at least tell me to what hotel she was going. Nay, for an instant a wild idea crossed my mind that she might ask me for my own name; for the circumstances under which we had become acquainted with each other were certainly unconventional, and, in my youthful inexperience, I fancied that they almost justified such a departure from common usage.

But it was clear that this was not her intention. She made no direct response to my words. But she gave me her hand, and whilst she again thanked me with her voice, she thanked me still more warmly with her eyes, which met my own for a single instant in a glance that thrilled my very heart.

Then, attended by the demure maid, by whom no word had been uttered during the whole journey, she left the carriage, and was almost directly lost to my view upon the crowded platform.

At the table d'hôte that evening I fear I paid little attention to the prosings of the old gentleman by my

side, who insisted upon taking me into his confidence as to the prospects of the trade of Bradford, and the state of politics in the West Riding. I am afraid, indeed, that despite all the information which he gave me in the rough honest tones which I found to be one of the characteristics of most of the people around me, I should stand a poor chance of gaining a competitive examination on the subject of the Bradford trade. Whether its *specialité* is woollen or worsted, broadcloth or shoddy, I cannot say even now; although I certainly ought to have known a great deal about it after my hour's talk with my good-natured neighbor at the table.

But all through that long dinner my mind was busy with the scene at the railway-station at York, and with the face of the girl who had made me her slave. Yes: difficult as it was to realize the fact, I could not dispute it. I, Cyril Fenton, twenty-five years of age, sober, steady, and thoughtful, whose whole life had been given to study under the care of the best of fathers, and who, until the great blow which had left me an orphan had descended upon me some six months before, had known little or nothing of the world beyond the walls of my happy home, had suddenly confuted all the ideas which my friends entertained of me and all the theories which I had formed for my own guidance in life, by falling desperately, even madly, in love with a girl whose very existence had been unknown to me six hours before, and of whose name, position, and character I was still in absolute ignorance.

I could hardly believe it, keen though the pain was which made me conscious of the truth. I should have liked to laugh my foolish passion to scorn; but I could

not do so. It had mastered me as I had never been mastered before. I almost groaned aloud as I realized the strength of the spell which had been cast over me by the subtle witchery of this fair stranger.

When I first took my seat at the dinner-table I had looked eagerly among the faces at the long tables, hoping that perchance I might see her there. It was a foolish fancy, and it was doomed to disappointment. Now, when at last the tedious meal was at an end, and I was released from the attentions of the kindly bore beside me, I hurried out of the great hotel, and took my way to the terrace in front of the saloon. It was still early, and the gay crowd had not yet mustered in force. I searched everywhere for her; and everywhere in vain.

And then I consoled myself with the thought that, after the agitation of the afternoon, she would hardly feel inclined to spend the evening in sauntering on the terrace, where now the laughing throng was moving slowly to and fro, whilst the strains of the band floated out across the bay, and a thousand streaks of silver told where the moonbeams kissed the crest of each wavelet as it leaped towards the shore. Yes, even this beautiful scene, which was almost new to me, for I had not visited Scarborough since I was a child, could hardly lure her out of doors to-night, after the excitement of such a day.

Yet whilst reason told me this, my eyes continued to seek for her everywhere, and it was not until long after the band had ceased to play and the last of the holiday-makers had retired that with an aching heart I gave up the fruitless search, and went to my bed, to pass a night of fitful slumber and troubled dreams.

CHAPTER II.

THE MILLIONAIRE.

THERE is hardly a brighter booth in "Vanity Fair," to adopt Thackeray's metaphor, than Scarborough; and its gayety was at the highest point when I reached it on that pleasant August afternoon. The hotels were full, the promenade was crowded every morning and evening, the band played its best, the weather was perfect during the long warm days, and every night there was a ball at one or other of the hotels.

It should have been impossible for a young man who had no private cares to worry him, who was passably well off, and who was now emerging from the shadow of bereavement, to feel dull in such a place. And yet never did I spend a duller or a more miserable week than that which followed my arrival at the Grand Hotel.

Day after day I went, immediately after breakfast, to the famous Spa grounds, haunting them till I became conscious of the fact that men and women alike speculated as to my identity. Night after night I was found in the same spot watching the giddy, laughing throng of pleasure-seekers, the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the wise, the foolish, as they sauntered up and down listening to the mingled music of the band and of the sea. I even went to some of the balls at the various hotels, and mingled with the frisky matrons, the dowdy country-girls, and the men of doubtful antecedents and unprepossessing appearance, who seemed to

constitute the stock company at these entertainments. I went everywhere where my fellow-creatures were in the habit of congregating, and gave every hour of my time that was not spent in sleep to the search on which I was intent. But all was in vain.

I was angry with myself because of the bondage in which my fancy held me, and again and again I thought of flying from the scene and forgetting everything in distant travel. But whenever I was on the point of carrying out this intention my resolution failed me. The picture of the loveliest face I had ever seen rose before my eyes. I saw her once again, as I had seen her when she stood before me, her hand resting lightly in my own, and her glance answering mine, as she spoke the few commonplace words which were her only farewell. And whenever that vision presented itself to me, the spell was thrown over me afresh, and I admitted to myself that I had met my fate—and succumbed to it.

Yet there was nothing that was pleasurable in my mood, even at those moments when I thought only of the girl's beauty and grace. I could not drive from my recollection the memory of that other face—the face of the man whom I had struck down at the railway-station at York. Whenever I thought of the one, the features of the other obtruded themselves upon me.

What was the reason of that strange scene, when she had appealed to me to drive this man from her presence? My heart grew hot with anger and bitter with unavailing jealousy as I reflected that at least he must have known her far better than I did, and that, deeply as she might hate him or fear him, he possessed some power over her of which I knew nothing.

What was the mystery associated with that beautiful face? In vain I racked my brain for some solution of the enigma. I only knew that in some fashion, holy or unholy, this girl, who in a brief hour of time had made me more completely her slave than any other human being had ever done, was associated with the man, vicious and vulgar, whose air of insolent triumph as he greeted her I could never recall without a shudder. There were not wanting other diversions in Scarborough besides those of which I have spoken, but I cared for none of them, and as the days passed, and my search met with no success, I would fain have shrunk even from the accidental acquaintances I had made in the hotel. It was only at the dinner-table, indeed, or in the smoking-room late at night, that I ever exchanged a word with a fellow-creature.

All round me, however, there was enough and more than enough of noisy talk to hide my sullen and self-absorbed silence. Nor could I shut my mind to a knowledge of the fact that all Scarborough was just then buzzing with excitement over a new topic of interesting gossip.

It was one of the society journals which had set the story, about which all were now talking, afloat. The gay watering-place had, it seemed, received among its many summer guests one who was exceptionally distinguished. It was not that he was of high rank or of great genius. Rank and genius are novelties to be found at times even at Scarborough, but they do not appear to make any great impression upon the ordinary frequenters of the place. That which set everybody talking about Mr. Mauleverer, the gentleman whose

presence in Scarborough had been chronicled in the society journal in question, was his enormous wealth. People talked of it, speculated upon it, gloated over it; and men and women alike were wild with anxiety to be brought into close contact with one whose riches were said to be fabulous in their amount.

Mr. Mauleverer, I discovered from what I saw in the newspapers and heard from those around me, was a millionaire of the new style. He was supposed to be some distant connection of the old Lancashire family of the same name. But, though English in blood and name, he was not English either by birth or upbringing. He was a colonist, and had been born and had spent all his life in Australia. The scandal-loving throng with whom I mixed in the hotel or on the promenade made light of his origin. There were some, indeed, who professed to know on that "best authority" which the tale-bearer always has at his command, that he was the son of a convict, a man who had disgraced his family in the early part of the present century, and who had expiated his sins by transportation. There were others who even hinted that he himself was not free from reproach. But upon two points there was no doubt in the mind of anybody. The first was, that the man was enormously rich—rich beyond the dreams of avarice—and the other, that he was a bachelor of something more than middle age.

As to the manner in which he had made the five millions sterling, with the possession of which he was credited, all sorts of stories were told. It was of course in keeping with the way of the world that some of these stories should be anything but creditable to the millionaire

himself. But young as I was, I had learned enough to know that it does not do to believe all the evil that is spoken of one's fellows, and for my part I inclined to the more charitable theory which alleged that Mauleverer's wealth had been accumulated by the simplest and most natural of all processes—the enormous increase which had taken place in the value of land in the colony in which he had been born. Starting life in the days when Australia was still in its infancy, as the owner of vast tracts of country, then comparatively valueless, he had seen his great sheep-walks, and the barren stretches of sandy soil which he owned in the neighborhood of the little ports that had since developed into flourishing cities, turned literally into gold without any effort on his own part.

“Five millions, if it is a penny!” This was what a young barrister named Harding, whose acquaintance I had made in the hotel smoking-room, was never tired of saying. “Five millions, and not an encumbrance of any kind, or chick or child to whom to leave it.”

“My dear fellow,” I responded feebly, for I felt but little interested in this all-absorbing topic, “what does it matter to you or to me how much the man is worth? We shall never reap any benefit from his gold.”

“Ah, you are young,” said my lively companion, who was really no older than myself. “You don't understand the world yet, Fenton. Haven't you seen how all the dowagers in the hotel here are laying their plans to capture the unfortunate wretch as soon as he makes his appearance among them? When you have lived a little longer you will begin to realize the power of gold. I tell you, sir, that there isn't a woman in this place, at this

moment, who wouldn't sell her daughter in marriage to this man Mauleverer, though he were old as Methusaleh, and as wicked as Satan. And there isn't a girl in the place, either, who wouldn't cheerfully say 'yes' to the bargain if it were proposed to her. Five millions! Why, the man who owns it can do anything."

"Why do you talk such nonsense?" I said, angrily. "You cannot mean what you say. You wish to make all women out to be as bad as a few men are."

I was hot with indignation. Why I hardly knew myself. I had no near female relations of my own—none for whom I cared. But somehow or other, when Harding talked in this style, sneering at all womankind as though all alike were bad, the face of the girl I had met in the train rose before my eyes, and I felt constrained to do battle with him, if it were only upon her account.

He laughed lazily.

"You excite yourself, my good fellow, unnecessarily," he said. "Of course I am not even hinting at the possibility of there being any mercenary persons among the ladies of your acquaintance. No doubt there are exceptions to every rule; but for my part I have not yet seen the woman whom five millions would not fetch. Wait and see for yourself, when the great man deigns to put in an appearance at the morning parade."

"I thought he had already done so," I replied, feeling a certain amount of compunction at the anger I had shown. "He has been in Scarborough for some time, has he not?"

"He is in this hotel at the present moment; but he is laid up with some illness,—gout, I suppose, as it is the

rich man's special ailment,—and has never been out of doors since his arrival, two weeks ago.”

This was only one of the innumerable occasions on which Mauleverer and his millions were dinned into my ears, until I grew to hate the very sound of the man's name. It seemed to me that this vulgar image of brazen wealth, about which everybody talked so constantly, was a rival even in my heart to that other image of youth and beauty upon which my fancy was fixed. I tried to shake off Harding's unpleasant suggestion with regard to the readiness of all women to yield themselves to the seductions of the man's gold; but I could not do so altogether, and in the state of mind to which my passion had brought me, I positively began to wish that this Mauleverer would take his departure from Scarborough before I had again met with the lady of the train. What, I thought to myself, if *she* were to be brought within the reach of the magical influence of the millions?

That she was still in the town I never for a moment doubted. Why I should have clung so stoutly to this conviction, I cannot pretend to say. But so it was. An instinct, some secret presentiment, assured me that she was still near me though unseen, and that I should meet her again.

One lovely morning, when the golden sunshine was flooding the bay, and the genial summer warmth, tempered by the pleasant sea-breeze, was tempting everybody out of doors, I went for my usual walk in the Spa grounds. Perhaps it was the weather that had stirred the young blood in my veins, and had made me feel more confident than I had ever done before of success;

but whatever may have been the cause, it is certain that as I walked across the bridge by which the grounds are entered my step was more elastic and my head lighter than on any previous visit to the place.

"How well you look this morning!" cried Harding, whom I found seated on a bench not far from the entrance to the grounds. "Scarborough suits you, I see. Come and sit beside me for a little. We can see all the world as it passes."

"Thanks; I'll join you presently," I said. "I would like first, however, to stroll to the end of the promenade."

Something within me urged me onward.

"Ah!" he replied, with a light laugh of genial mockery. "You are like everybody else, I see. But how long is it since you vowed to me that the man's gold would never—no, never—attract you?"

I looked at him in blank surprise, and said nothing.

"What! have you not heard?" he continued, after reading the truth in my puzzled face. "Why, I thought the news had spread by this time to the uttermost nooks and corners of Scarborough. Why, *he* is there—down below by the band—Mauleverer, the millionaire. That is why we have this end of the gardens to ourselves this morning. It is just as I told you it would be—all the old dowagers are fighting for places near him; but unfortunately for their chances the young ladies have been beforehand, and have made a regular ring round the man. It is quite a pretty spectacle, I assure you: all the beauty and talent of the 'Queen of English Watering Places'—that's what they call it, is it not?—concentrated in one particular spot, and all for the bene-

fit of one poor mortal in the ordinary dress of a nineteenth-century tourist."

"Confound the fellow!" I said. "I care nothing either for him or his money. I shall stop with you." And I seated myself beside him.

Harding lifted his hat, and made me a low bow.

"What a compliment you pay me! Believe me I am grateful. But there, my good fellow, don't waste your time on me. Even if you don't care about the millionaire it will be well worth your while to have a peep at the pretty faces. There are some fresh ones to-day, and some of them, I assure you, are not unworthy even of your attention. Go; and I'll wait for you, to hear what you think of the spectacle."

He lighted a cigarette with that air of buoyant self-possession which I could not help envying in him, and I felt compelled to comply with his wish.

Perhaps he had exaggerated a little when he described the popular excitement over Mauleverer's advent. There were, at any rate, some worthy people sitting under the veranda, or by the side of the sea-wall, who seemed more intent upon the enjoyment of the sunshine, or of each other's society, than upon mobbing the man of millions. Indeed, when I reached the open space in the middle of which the stand for the musicians is placed, though I was conscious that the attendance at that point was unusually large, I saw nothing of the excitement of which Harding had spoken. People were sitting or walking about very much in their usual fashion, and if there were some special centre of attraction, I, at all events, was unable to discover it.

I looked round to see if I could identify the man

about whom I had heard so much. There were elderly gentlemen of every complexion, style, and character seated in the bright sunshine; and once or twice I thought that I had fixed upon the millionaire. But invariably, in such cases, the person who seemed to me to suit the character was accompanied by a lady of nearly his own age, who appeared to exercise over him all the authority of a wife. None of these persons, therefore, could be Mauleverer, who, I had been told, was not married.

I was on the point of turning away with a cynical reflection in my mind upon the difficulty of identifying any particular character by the outward appearance of a man, when I saw that which made my heart for a moment stand still, and then beat with a violence that almost stifled me.

She was there! Seated in one of the most sheltered corners of the open space, her face half hidden by the parasol which she held, she was leaning back listening to the music, and taking little notice of the crowd around her. I knew her in an instant; knew her in spite of the fact that the parasol shaded her face, and that she was dressed in a different style from that which she wore when I last saw her. The heavens seemed suddenly to have opened themselves above me. The scene had been brilliant enough before, in that glorious morning sunshine; but it seemed to have been darkness itself to what it was now, when I had found her again. All thought of the millionaire passed clean out of my mind. If I had come upon a thousand Mauleverers at that moment I should not have seen one of them.

And yet I did not obey the first wild prompting of

my heart and rush forward to claim acquaintance with her. An unaccountable shyness came over me. I dared not make myself known to her again. How could I tell that she wished to see me once more? In her mind I must be associated with a painful and humiliating incident. It might well be that she would wish never to meet me again.

But even as this dark thought crossed my mind, sending a sudden chill through my veins, like that caused by the passing of a thunder-cloud across the summer sky, I remembered her look when she bade me farewell, and hope and joy again gained the ascendancy. I felt that there was between us a link of sympathy the nature of which I might not perhaps understand, but the reality of which I could not question.

What joy it was to stand there, unseen by her, and watch the beautiful face! I only now began to understand how deeply I loved her. The world might laugh at me as it pleased—a month ago I should have been ready to laugh at myself; but for me this was the one woman of all women—my love, my life, my fate. I knew it now, if I had not realized it during the long days of restless torture which had passed since I last saw her.

Her face was paler than it had been then, I saw, and her whole expression was more subdued, more pensive than it was when we conversed in the railway-carriage. There was something in her eyes which I could not understand—a far-away, dreamy look, as though the mind were engaged upon quite other scenes than those which were impressed upon the retina. A pang of jealousy shot through my breast as I noticed this.

How dear she was to me! That was what I whispered

to my heart. It seemed as though I had known her and loved her all the days of my life; and when once, with a gesture which I had observed when I sat opposite to her in the railway-carriage, she adjusted one of the dark brown tresses of her hair, the sweet familiarity of the movement made my eyes moist with sudden emotion.

Her companion was a little man, plainly, almost shabbily, dressed, whose gray hair and bent frame indicated that he was advanced in life, and who showed by the manner in which he used his glasses that he was short-sighted. I could trace no resemblance to her in his features. Once or twice she spoke to him, and I saw that when she did so he always turned towards her with a quick movement of attention, and that his withered old face lighted up with a smile of love.

I stood half hidden by a pillar, feasting my eyes upon the sight that was so dear to me, and absorbed in it to the complete exclusion of everything else.

Somebody touched my arm. I turned and saw Harding standing beside me with a cynical smile upon his face.

"This is worse than I expected," he said in bantering tones; "I never thought that you of all men would have succumbed so quickly; but I have been watching you for the last ten minutes, and I'll swear you have never taken your eyes off him for the whole of that time."

"Him! About whom are you speaking?" I asked, impatient at the interruption.

He laughed. "What innocence! What blissful ignorance! As if there could be anybody here this morning worth looking at save the man of gold! Your instinct did not deceive you. You are quite right in

supposing that shabby old gentleman sitting beside the pretty girl in navy blue to be Mauleverer the millionaire."

"You don't mean to tell me—" I began in dismay.

"That the spectacled gentleman in the gray coat and the venerable felt hat is Mauleverer? Yes, I do. But surely you knew it beforehand; for you have looked at nobody else since I joined you, and you were so completely absorbed in studying him that you never saw me till I touched your arm."

From the height of joy I felt myself suddenly plunged into the icy-cold depths of despair. The man beside whom the girl I loved was sitting was none other than the millionaire himself. It seemed as though a great gulf had been instantaneously opened up between us. I could still see every feature of the dear face, but she herself had been removed to a distance from which she was inaccessible to me.

Harding eyed me closely.

"You do not look so well as you did when you came into the grounds," he said presently. "Are you unwell? Let us go back to the seat where you met me. We shall see them pass when they go to the hotel."

He put his arm in mine, and led me away. I made no resistance; and yet I felt as though I were leaving the best part of my life behind me. By an effort I nerved myself, and said,

"Do you know anything of the lady who was with him?"

"I know that she is wonderfully good-looking,—quite the prettiest girl on the ground,—and that he seems devoted to her. But we shall soon know all about their

relationship, if there is one, and whether she is or is not likely to carry off the grand prize. Trust the matrons of Scarborough to find out everything on that subject."

I sat silent and perturbed. The thought that was uppermost in my mind was that I had only found her again in order to lose her altogether.

And even as I was chewing the cud of this bitter reflection, Harding lightly touched my arm and whispered in my ear something which I could not catch. I looked up quickly, and there, approaching us at a distance of not more than a dozen feet, were Mauleverer and the girl whom I loved. Suddenly she saw me. The pallor which I had noticed on her face disappeared, and a rich blush dyed her cheeks; for a moment her eyes met mine, and she bowed, with a smile that made the sunshine itself seem dark beside it, and then she was gone.

I had seen nothing but her as she passed me. Her companion, so far as any consciousness of mine told me anything, might have faded into space at the moment when she smiled upon me. But Harding had noticed him. He turned to me with a look of bewilderment.

"So *you* know the young lady, do you, my quiet friend? You ought to be proud of having produced that scowl of jealousy which I saw upon Mr. Mauleverer's face just now. It is not every day, you know, that a man of your age is allowed the privilege of running, even in a losing race, against a millionaire."

CHAPTER III.

DAISY.

I WENT to my room at the hotel in a state of agitation which I found it difficult to conceal from Harding. I had seen the woman who exercised so strange a fascination over me—but under what circumstances! She was the companion of a man whose incredible wealth made him a creature apart. I am as little inclined as most men to worship mere money, but I had not needed the cynical advice of Harding to grasp the bitter truth that in these times there is a great gulf fixed between the rich and the poor. I myself, it is true, was not poor. My father had left me in possession of a moderate competence; but in comparison with the fabulous riches of Mauleverer my little income was shrivelled into absolute nothingness.

Moreover there was the bitter fact that I did not know the relationship between her and the millionaire. Might it not be possible that, like many other men who have reached the age when mind and body alike are beginning to decay, he cherished the illusion that he might renew his youth by uniting his own life to that of a beautiful girl?

And yet, as I vexed myself with these ideas, I could not subdue the joy I felt at the thought that I had at last found a clue to my unknown love, and that at this very moment I was under the roof which also sheltered her. On this point I was indebted to Harding for my

knowledge. He had speedily discovered from one of his friends that Mauleverer had been accompanied by the young lady when he returned to the Grand Hotel. To discover her name and the relationship in which she stood to the millionaire was now Harding's mission.

Whilst he was pursuing this congenial task among the gossips of the saloon, I retired to my own room and sat there wrapped in uneasy contemplation. By and by I was roused by a tap at the door, and thinking only that Harding had brought me some information, I called to him to enter. I turned to greet him with an eager question, when, to my amazement, I saw that, instead of Harding, Mauleverer himself was standing before me.

His appearance was so great a surprise that I was only able to face him in silence, while he on his part showed a certain amount of embarrassment and even shyness. He stood before me, a withered, prematurely-aged man, with pale wrinkled face, and dim eyes that looked out feebly through the spectacles he habitually wore. It was difficult to conceive that this forlorn-looking creature, who bore all the marks of decrepitude and suffering, was the man whom everybody in this gay world of Scarborough was envying. As I looked at him I forgot all about his millions, and only saw in him the feeble valetudinarian to whom existence itself must be a penance.

He spoke at last, and when he did so my heart leaped with joy, for I thought I detected in the mild sweet accents of his voice something that reminded me of my companion of the railway-carriage. There was a grave smile on his face, too, that redeemed its careworn ugliness.

"You will forgive me, sir, for intruding upon you," he said with a shy hesitation, by which I was both surprised and touched. "I did not know, when my niece recognized you this morning, that you had rendered her so great a service as that which she has described to me. I am very grateful. I ought to have been there to protect her; but, unluckily for me, I was laid up here with the throat-complaint that so constantly troubles me. I have come to thank you in her name and my own."

His niece! That was the first thing I grasped as he spoke. Then at least we were not rivals! I am afraid that Mauleverer must have thought my conduct rather peculiar. When he held out his hand at the close of the little speech I have just repeated, I grasped it with a fervor that made him wince, but I found it even more difficult than he had done to express myself in words.

Of course I answered him that any man would have been only too proud to have had the opportunity of saving his niece; and I asked eagerly if she had suffered from the shock of the encounter at York, telling him that I thought she had looked pale when I met her on the Promenade.

He regarded me steadily for a moment with his mild eyes. I could see that he did not altogether relish my comments on her appearance.

"Thank you very much," he said with his old-fashioned precision of speech; "Miss Stancliffe did not suffer at all from her journey, owing to your kindness; but I am sorry to say she has been an absolute prisoner ever since then through my illness. She is an excellent nurse, and when I am ill, as I too often am, unfortunately, she allows no one else to wait upon me."

And then he explained how it had happened that she had been travelling without male escort when I met her. He had come down to Scarborough merely to engage rooms, intending to return to London for his niece. But a sudden blast of the treacherous east wind had laid him low, and instead of going back to town in order to escort Miss Stancliffe ("What a pretty name!" I thought to myself) he had been compelled to telegraph to her to ask her to join him at once in her favorite capacity of nurse.

By this time we had both of us recovered our self-possession and were chatting almost on the footing of old friends. He took up a book which was lying on my table. It was a volume of Wordsworth.

"You are fond of poetry? So is Daisy—Miss Stancliffe. She reads a great deal now, and I often get the advantage of her reading. You see we have very few friends. We are strangers in England, my niece and I."

"I don't suppose you will have to wait very long before you have an abundant supply of friends," I ventured to remark, with a smile.

He answered me quite seriously and simply. "I do not know. There are so many things to be considered. One must be very careful in a place like England—so I have been told. Sometimes I think we made a mistake in coming home: we might have been happier over there."

He rose to go, again holding out his hand.

"Excuse me," I said, "but with your permission I should like to tell you who and what I am." And then I hurriedly told him my name, and how I had been brought up, the only child of my father, on our little prop-

erty in Hampshire — a mere cottage with a few score acres of ground around it; how I had begun the study of medicine, but had been compelled to abandon it owing to my father's long illness, when my services as a nurse were in constant requisition; and how his death six months before had left me my own master—and quite alone in the world.

He heard me with courteous attention, his pale eyes fixed on my face all the time I was speaking, and when I finished my little autobiography with the account of my father's death, he pressed my hand sympathetically, but all he said was,

“Ah! I see that, like my niece, you have had experience in humoring the weakness and attending to the wants of feeble old age. Good-day to you, sir. I hope you will forgive me for troubling you with this visit.”

And then he went out of the room with that quiet meek manner of his, that contrasted so strangely with the reputation he enjoyed among the people around him; and I was left alone to dream as Alnaschar himself never did.

It was not until the next morning that I saw either Mauleverer or his niece again. Harding had not been idle during the day. He too had ascertained the relationship between the millionaire and the young lady; he had even learned her surname. But in addition to this he had been told by one of his informants that, after all, there was a little doubt as to whether Miss Stancliffe was in reality the niece of Mauleverer. “There is some mystery about her,” he remarked carelessly, not knowing how deeply I was interested in her.

I had taken a liking to Harding. His cheery cynicism

acted as a wholesome corrective to my boyish optimism, and I had found in his talk at the dinner-table and in the smoking-room almost the only enjoyment I had yet tasted in Scarborough. I felt that it was due to him that I should give him some explanation of my acquaintance with Miss Stancliffe; but I was careful to say nothing of the scene at the railway-station at York.

“Well, my boy,” he said, when I had finished my recital, which included an account of Mauleverer’s visit to my room, “all I can say is that you are deucedly lucky. Why, you have made friends with the prettiest girl and the richest man in England! It is always you quiet dogs who carry everything before you. Don’t be surprised, however, if I try to cut you out.”

And so next day, when again the glorious sunshine tempted the most delicate out of doors, I not only saw my love, but spoke to her, held her hand in mine, looked into her eyes, and felt that the beautiful face was lighted up with smiles that were meant for me and for me alone.

Ah, my love, my love! As I look back upon that happy day when first our real friendship began; when I see you in my mind’s eye as you were then, with the bright light of youth and freedom from care shining in your countenance; when I hear once more through the years that have passed the pure melodious voice and the sweet laugh of innocence and joy; and when I remember all that has happened since—the mystery and the tragedy, the pain, the sin, the sorrow, the cruel suffering and bitter degradation through which you have been called upon to pass—I can scarcely realize the fact that you and that lovely laughing girl are one and the same. It was

surely in another world that you and I walked apart from all our fellows, on that day never to be effaced from my memory, on which we first sat side by side as friends!

I never saw that of which Harding told me afterwards—the undisguised astonishment and envy which were exhibited by the frequenters of the Spa saloon when I was seen in the enjoyment of this familiar intercourse with the millionaire and his beautiful niece. I have told how people had begun to take note of my restless march up and down the promenade during those days when I was still searching for my unknown love. No doubt I had been made the subject of mild jests, and perhaps some grotesque romance had been invented regarding me, for there is no place like Scarborough in the season for the production of fictions of this kind. And now, I alone, of all that envious throng, had the privilege of the friendship of the man of millions! It was hardly wonderful that there should have been almost as much of gossip and tittle-tattle regarding me as there was about Mauleverer himself.

It mattered nothing and less than nothing to me. Nay, for the moment, I can honestly aver that I had absolutely forgotten all about Mauleverer's wealth. He might have been as poor as his outward appearance indicated, for all I cared during that first blissful season of love upon which I had now entered.

Daisy had something more than her beauty to commend her to me. That was rare enough, as everybody was ready to admit. Her features, it is true, were not of the "faultily faultless" description: some found the chin too massive, or the forehead too square, or the nose too long or too short. I could not have argued the question

with these people even if I had wished to do so. I could no more have analyzed that proud sweet face, on which at times lay a strange shadow of reserve, mingled with the bright frankness by which it was usually lighted up, than I could have weighed the pale moonbeams which made the earth glorious by night. All that I knew was that I had never seen a face like it, and that to me it was as the magnet towards which my whole life was to be henceforth drawn.

But all the world could share with me the privilege of gazing on the lovely face. That which was mine alone was the intimacy which enabled me to know that her mind was as beautiful as her countenance. For from the first she was frank and unreserved with me on all points save one. I found her as pure and simple and unsophisticated as a child, yet with a woman's sympathy with the nobler aspirations of a man, a woman's quickness in reading my thoughts, and a woman's tact in dealing with my various moods.

On that first morning on which we were together there was a certain shyness mingled with her cordiality. I could see by the troubled expression which occasionally passed over her face when her eyes by chance met mine that she was thinking of our first strange meeting and of the unpleasant incident associated with it. But though it was constantly in my mind as well as hers, no reference was made to it on either side.

She was full of wonder and admiration at the scene around her. The week she had already spent in Scarborough had been passed in the sick-chamber of her uncle, and all was now new to her.

"No, I never went out," she said, in reply to a

question of mine. "I should have liked to do so, but I could not leave him." She indicated Mauleverer, who was sitting on the other side of her, surveying the brilliant scene before him with an air of interest. "Besides, there were various reasons why it was not well for me to be out until my uncle could accompany me."

"How strange," I said, "that we should actually have been in the same hotel all the time! I have looked for you everywhere."

Probably there was more in the tone of my voice than in my words themselves. At all events, she blushed when I spoke, and made no direct response.

"Are there many places in England as beautiful as this? You know we are only colonists. I have seen hardly anything of England. It is not three months since we landed, and I have spent nearly all that time in a dreadful hotel in Bond Street."

"You will find many beautiful places in England," I replied, "but Scarborough has a charm of its own. You would need to go abroad to find anything that really resembled the scene now before us."

"How different it all is from our life in Australia! You know we lived up-country. My uncle was always attending to his sheep; and it was very seldom that I was allowed to see a town, or to have any pleasure but a long ride by myself."

"Were you not at school?" I asked.

"Yes, but that was long before—" she hesitated, "before I came to live with him. Since then I have had to trust to poor dear Mrs. Cawthorne. She was my governess, you know, and almost my only lady-friend. I am afraid I am fearfully ignorant."

"Nay," I cried with boyish enthusiasm. "Have you not been telling me of the books you have read? You have made me ashamed of myself, you have read so much more than I have done. Was it Mrs. Cawthorne who led you to study Herbert Spencer?"

She blushed, and said, "No, that was an idea of my own."

"And are you going to stop long in England?" I ventured to inquire of her.

"Oh, yes: have you not heard? My uncle has bought a house in Yorkshire. He means to remain here, I hardly know why." She glanced round, and saw that the millionaire was slumbering gently. With a loving hand she drew the light overcoat across his chest, and placed a handkerchief round his throat. The day was hot enough, no doubt, but Mauleverer was still an invalid.

"I was saying," she continued, "that we are going to live here, and that I hardly know why. I am sure we were happier in Australia. But I think he was over-persuaded."

She seemed as though she had something more to say; but whatever it was it remained unsaid.

"And where is this house that your uncle has bought?" I asked with interest.

"It is at Great Lorton, about thirty miles from here, I believe, among the wolds. I have never seen it, but he has, and he says it is very old and beautiful."

I had heard of the house as one of the finest relics of domestic architecture left in Yorkshire, which is rich in such remains; but I had not even the faintest conception of its whereabouts in "the broad county."

And so our talk ran on until all at once the band

ceased to play, and to our amazement we discovered that the luncheon hour had arrived, and that the stream of loungers was already pouring towards the gates.

I offered Mr. Mauleverer my arm; for he looked very worn and frail. He accepted it with thanks that were out of all proportion to the favor. But if he had been even more exuberant in his expressions of gratitude I should have counted them as nothing compared with the look of pleasure I detected on the face of his niece. Never, surely, was a simple act of every-day courtesy more richly repaid.

This is not, alas! a love-story. It deals with other things besides love; and so I shall not dwell upon the happy days that followed—by far the happiest I have ever known in my placid, uneventful life. Day after day found me by Daisy's side; and I was the recognized attendant of her and the millionaire whenever they appeared in the Saloon grounds. Once or twice I accompanied them on drives to neighboring places of interest; and by and by, when Mr. Mauleverer's health improved, we went for long walks together. I never saw Daisy during the whole of this time by herself. When her uncle could not leave the hotel she invariably remained with him. Many days of delightful companionship passed before I had my first chance of speaking to her alone.

Even then the chance was brought about in a somewhat ludicrous fashion. The "society papers" were now full of Mr. Mauleverer and his millions. I could not take up one of them in which I did not find his name. Now it was some wonderful story that was told about the magnificence with which Great Lorton Hall

was being furnished and otherwise prepared for his residence; now it was a yacht which he had bought from the executors of a deceased duke, and which was being redecorated for his use in accordance with the traditions of the Arabian nights, rather than any more sober or prosaic precedents; and now it was an elaborate calculation of the number of guineas per hour which, by day and night, were being poured into the pockets of my friend.

When I read these tales I found it very difficult to connect them with the plain, almost shabbily dressed, gentleman, who, although he had secured the best suite of rooms at the hotel, still lived in perfect simplicity of style, and gave no evidence either of the possession of wealth or the taste for extravagant expenditure which, if these tales were true, he undoubtedly had. I never, of course, made any reference to these newspaper paragraphs when I was with Mauleverer and his niece. Daisy, I was certain, knew nothing of them, and would have been revolted by their vulgarity; whilst I was strongly induced to suspect that the millionaire himself was equally ignorant.

But if I put all this gossip aside as being probably nothing more than the concoction of imaginative penny-a-liners, it was taken very seriously by not a few of the people around us. The more Mauleverer and his millions were talked about in the newspapers, indeed, the more wild most persons became to secure his acquaintanceship.

There was a lady staying at the Grand Hotel for whom I had conceived a strong aversion from the first, and who apparently regarded me with just as little favor

as I showed her. Yet I had, as it turned out, great reason to be grateful to her.

Mrs. Domville, the lady in question, was very big, very stout, with a flaming scarlet face, the color of which in its richness matched the ribbons and dresses she habitually wore. She was a constant attendant at those balls of which I have spoken, which are perhaps the most objectionable of all the features of life at Scarborough during the season. On these occasions she was invariably accompanied by her son and daughter, the former a weedy-looking youth of twenty, the latter big and bouncing like her mother, and handsome into the bargain, which is more than one could have said for Mrs. Domville herself.

It happened that I had danced on one occasion with the daughter. It was when a ball was held in our own hotel, and I had been pressed into the service by an agonized master of the ceremonies, who found that the demand for dancing men far exceeded the supply. Miss Domville was not a person who cared to encourage the attentions of an unknown swain. Goodness knows that she had no reason to snub me on this account, for after our single dance I was quite ready to drop the acquaintance; but snub me she did, and her mother evidently encouraged her in doing so.

I was not a little surprised therefore, when, chancing to meet Mrs. Domville one day in the hall of the hotel, I was saluted by her with a warmth that was more than usually friendly.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Fenton, I am so pleased to see you again. What a time it is since we met! Are you to be at the ball to-night? Pray come and ask Arabella

for the first waltz. Shall I tell her to engage herself for it? Now I know how good-natured you are. You will never say No, I am sure."

Thus the magnificent creature ran on in a style which almost took my breath away. I *did* say "No," however, and rather bluntly too. She was in no wise disconcerted.

"By the way," she said, "I have a particular favor to ask of you. I see that you are acquainted with the Mauleverers. Now I am quite certain that Mr. Mauleverer is the friend of a very dear friend of my own. I have heard so much about him, that I really must speak to him. So now I look to you to introduce me the next time we meet."

Mrs. Domville looked so formidable that it required some courage to show any hesitation in promising to gratify her wish. Nevertheless I did hesitate, for I knew that the promiscuous acquaintances Mr. Mauleverer had hitherto made in the hotel had apparently bored him. I was indeed not a little afraid that I myself was no exception to the rule.

"I think I must ask Mr. Mauleverer himself before I can promise to do that." I replied, "You know he is not in good health."

"Then ask him now, for he is here."

I turned and saw Mauleverer and Daisy standing beside me. The former had evidently heard his own name, and with the quiet simplicity and courtesy which were characteristic of the man he came forward.

Mrs. Domville favored him with a courtesy which would have done credit to the Queen's drawing-room. She looked as if she would have liked to kiss the rich man's hand.

"Forgive me, sir," she said in a reverential manner that was quite new to her so far as my experience went; "I was asking our young friend Mr. Fenton to do me the honor of introducing me to you. I have been so anxious ever since I heard you were here to question you about an old friend of mine whom I *think* you once knew very intimately."

The millionaire looked puzzled, but he was listening with grave attention to the lady.

"Perhaps you are going down to the saloon," continued the latter. "Ah then, if you would be so very kind as to permit me to walk with you I could explain what I mean."

"By all means, madame," responded the innocent old gentleman, and he turned to the door of the hotel closely attended by Mrs. Domville. Daisy and I followed them.

"Who is this woman, and what does she want with my uncle?" she asked.

"She wants all Scarborough to see her walking with him on the promenade, I suppose," I replied.

Daisy looked at me with eyes of innocent wonder. She scarcely seemed to comprehend.

"I am vexed," she said presently; "I hope we should have been all by ourselves, to-day at least."

"To-day! Is there any special reason connected with to-day?" I asked.

"Yes," she responded with a faint sigh. "To-morrow our friends are coming, and I fear there will be no more pleasant mornings for us all, such as we have had lately."

"Your friends!" I murmured, perplexed and dismayed.

"Yes, the only friends we have in England, Dr. Branksome and Mrs. Fosdyke. They are coming to-morrow in the yacht which I believe my uncle has bought."

Pain and jealousy filled my heart. It seemed that those halcyon days which had brought so much of joy to me were at an end.

"And will your new friends—I beg pardon, your old friends I ought to have said—make it impossible for you to see me any more?"

My tone was hard and constrained, but I could not help myself. She looked into my face a little doubtfully, and then she withdrew her eyes quickly. I knew then that she had read the secret of my heart. I felt her arm trembling within my own. I forgot everything; the shortness of our acquaintance, Mauleverer's millions—no, I did think of them, and I cursed them bitterly as I saw in them a barrier between myself and my darling. But for those wretched millions I should have spoken there and then and learned my fate. Ah, how little I knew all that hung upon that moment of fatal indecision!

For the next instant it was too late to speak. The loud voice of Mrs. Domville was heard calling me to bring Miss Stancliffe to the place where she and Mr. Mauleverer was sitting, in order that she might introduce her weedy son to the rich man's niece.

I was forced to move, but as I did so I said with passionate emphasis, "You will not forget me, you will not drop me now because your other friends are coming?"

"How could you think that we should?" she answered with a laugh that was somewhat forced. "Only I

fear it will be altogether different then," she added, "and it has been a delightful time—has it not?"

For the rest of the morning I was doomed to listen to the vulgar chatter of the woman who had thus, almost forcibly, laid hands not only upon Mauleverer himself, but upon my darling. But when we parted in the hall of the hotel there was an expression on Daisy's face that did something to assuage my jealous misery.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOLDEN HAWK.

MY bedroom commanded a fine view of the sea, and when I looked out of my window on the morning following the incident with Mrs. Domville, the first thing that attracted my attention was a magnificent schooner-yacht lying at anchor some two miles from the shore. It was the largest and most beautiful vessel of the kind I had ever seen, and I examined it with interest through a powerful field-glass which I had in my room. There is no sight more attractive to the lover of the sea than a fine vessel, whose lines bear witness to her power of riding over the waves. What a Derby favorite is to the lover of horseflesh, a yacht is to the sailor.

This, however, was no common yacht, and I wondered to myself to whom it belonged and whence it had come to delight the eyes of the people of Scarborough. Early as it was, the attention of people on shore had already been drawn to the stately vessel in the bay, and small

cobbles laden with curious sightseers were being rowed out to her. Presently I saw one of the yacht's boats, a large gig, coming rapidly from the vessel to the shore, and through my glass I was able to perceive that in addition to her crew she carried three passengers—all men.

Such an event as the arrival of a yacht in the bay always furnishes food for gossip during the season at Scarborough, and many were the inquiries put forth at the breakfast-table that morning with regard to the ownership of this magnificent schooner. It was not, however, till Harding made his appearance that any light was thrown upon the subject.

"Seen your friend's boat?" he said to me as he dropped into his usual chair by my side. "It does more credit to his taste than I should have expected."

"And is that Mr. Mauleverer's yacht?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes, so I am told. It is the 'Golden Hawk,' which was built for the Duke of Cairngorm just before he died. There isn't a finer boat afloat."

"And pray how have you learned all this?" I said, feeling rather nettled at the fact that he should know so much more than I did of the affairs of my friends.

"Easily enough, my good fellow! Did you not see the party from the yacht come up to the hotel—one tall and two short? A sailor came up with them, and I made it my business to ask him the name of the vessel and its owner."

"And the three gentlemen—where are they?"

"So far as I know," answered Harding, "they are with Mauleverer."

These, then, were the friends of whom Daisy had spoken to me. A restless feeling of jealousy filled my heart. When the hour at which the millionaire and his niece usually made their appearance in the hall of the hotel—where they invariably found me in attendance—had arrived, there were no signs of them. I waited with a lover's impatience, not daring either to leave the hall or to go to Mauleverer's sitting-room to make any inquiry about them. How slowly the minutes passed, and what a change seemed to have come over the whole scene since the previous day, when, at least, I had rejoiced in a monopoly of the friendship of the girl I loved!

Only a lover who has himself suffered from the pains of jealousy can enter into the mood which possessed me as I waited in that familiar hall, conscious of the fact that others knew *why* I was waiting, and perhaps rejoiced in my manifest discomfiture. At last—fully an hour after the usual time for their appearance—I heard a movement in the gallery above me that filled me with hope. Immediately afterwards Mr. Mauleverer appeared descending the staircase between two gentlemen. One of these was a prim little man, very neatly dressed, with handsome, clean-cut features, and eyes that looked sharply round through the gold-rimmed *pince-nez* which he wore. The other was a person of much sturdier build and rougher cast of countenance. Short in stature, he was thick-set and clumsy in frame, whilst his features were coarse and harsh. He might have been a seafaring man, I thought, and I concluded that perhaps he was the captain of the *Golden Hawk*.

Mauleverer was chatting with his friends with a

brightness which I had not seen him show before during my brief acquaintance with him. It was evident that he was greatly pleased to have met them again. I looked behind him, but there was no sign of Daisy, nor of the third stranger of whose arrival I had heard. I believe that in his absorption in his new friends the millionaire would have passed me unnoticed if I had not myself addressed him. For an instant he regarded me with his mild eyes almost as though he had forgotten my identity. But in a moment he recovered himself and greeted me with his usual kindly courtesy.

"I hope you have had a pleasant morning on the Spa," he said. He had no conception of how my morning had been spent. "Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Fosdyke." He indicated the gentleman with the *pince-nez*, who bowed elaborately on hearing my name. The rough-looking man, against whom I already felt prejudiced, hung back a foot or two, and Mauleverer made no reference to him. I could see, however, that the man was staring hard at me with anything but an amiable expression on his face.

"And Miss Stancliffe," I ventured to say—"I hope she is well this morning."

"Oh, quite well, thank you; but she is occupied, owing to the arrival of our friends." And then, with a pleasant bow, he went on, attended by his two companions.

I was vaguely conscious of the fact that when I had mentioned Daisy's name, it was not only the rough-looking man with the hard and resolute face who had favored me with a searching stare. From behind the glittering *pince-nez* of Fosdyke a pair of keen eyes had at that moment been fixed upon me, and I cursed the

ridiculous inability to preserve an unmoved countenance, from which I was conscious that I suffered whenever Daisy was mentioned. Henceforward I felt I should, at least, be closely watched in all my intercourse with her.

But where was she? Sharp, beyond the power of words to describe it, was the pain which gnawed at my heart as I thought of her even at this moment engaged in confidential talk with this unknown friend. Was he old or young? Who was he? What was he? I struck my heel savagely upon the pavement of the hall as I asked myself these questions.

And even as I did so she appeared. I had only time to observe that her companion was unusually tall, and that he seemed to have passed the limits of middle-age. In another instant my hand had taken hers, and I was feasting my eyes upon her dear face.

But what was the change that I saw there? It was as beautiful as ever; but a shadow of some kind had passed over it since we parted on the previous day. I have spoken before of that veil of reserve which once or twice when we were together on the promenade had spread itself over her features. It was the same thing that I saw now, though it was more pronounced and real. This shadow of trouble, or timidity, or doubt—I could not tell which—was at least no creation of my own imagination.

Her smile was kind as it had ever been; but I observed that her face was flushed, and it was with manifest embarrassment that she turned to her companion and said, "This is Mr. Fenton."

Had they been speaking of me before? This was my

first thought when I heard her words. The next moment I was conscious of a courteous and even friendly greeting from her companion. I looked up ; for although I myself am tall, this man towered far above me. I looked into what I felt at once was one of the most powerful faces I had ever seen—a face that still retained traces of manly beauty, though its owner was evidently verging upon threescore. The wide open forehead appeared to indicate benevolence of character as well as intellectual superiority ; the eyes were grave, but frank. Every feature of the face was prepossessing except the mouth. I thought the straight thin lips were out of harmony with the general aspect of the man.

“ Miss Stancliffe has told me of her acquaintance with you,” he said with a genial smile, which showed his beautiful white teeth to advantage, “ and, like the rest of her friends, I feel grateful to you for the service you rendered her.”

He put his hand familiarly on her arm. “ My dear,” he said, “ we shall none of us fail to do justice to Mr. Fenton.”

I thought there was a trace of fear in the look which Daisy turned upon him as he uttered these words.

“ You came by the schooner I see in the bay this morning ?” I said, chiefly for the sake of saying something and thus prolonging the interview.

“ Yes, sir, we did,” he replied. “ You have seen the Golden Hawk ? A fine boat, and one of which I think this young lady will feel very proud as its mistress.”

He looked down upon her with a protecting smile. I saw that she pressed closer to him as he spoke, as though responding to some unuttered sentiment of affection.

And yet as she did so her eyes sought mine. I could not interpret their expression; but I was clearly conscious of the fact that trouble was in store for us.

I could hardly believe, however, that the trouble was likely to come from this man, with his powerful and commanding countenance, his polished manner, and his genial air.

"By the way," he said, "I think this little girl has forgotten to perform the whole of her duty. She has not told you my name. I am Dr. Branksome." I bowed, and he smiled anew. "Has Miss Stancliffe not told you all about my connection with her?" he continued. "I see she has not done so. Well, I suppose a young lady who finds herself in Scarborough for the first time in her life has something better to do than to tell tales about the old fogies whom she has known at the other side of the world. Eh, my dear, is that not it?"

She might have been his daughter to judge by the easy familiarity with which he pinched her ear as he spoke. Daisy still had the troubled smile upon her face she had worn when she last looked at me. She did not speak. It almost seemed as though she could not have spoken if she would.

"I see I shall have my own story to tell, Mr. Fenton," he continued, in his full rich voice. "You are surprised, perhaps, to see me on such very friendly terms with Miss Stancliffe. But you would not be surprised if you knew that she lived under my roof for more than twelve years of her life,—from four to sixteen,—and that during all that time she honestly believed me to be her father. A strange story, sir. I can see that is in your

mind ; but it is a true story also. So now you understand how it is that if Daisy has an uncle in Mr. Mauleverer, she has a father in me."

My first feeling on hearing him make this statement was one of incredulity. I had heard her so often speak with loving gratitude of her uncle that I felt certain that if she had really regarded this new-comer as her father, she would have spoken of him also. I remembered, too, the trouble that was manifest on her face when she had told me on the previous day of the approaching arrival of her friends. It was inconceivable, I thought, that she would have felt this trouble if she had really entertained a daughter's love for Branksome. But, however this might be, there was no doubt now that she was unreservedly under the sway of his influence. She responded to his speech with a look of gratitude and affection, and stood quite passive while his hand still rested on her arm.

The situation was becoming embarrassing. I did not know in what words to reply to Dr. Branksome's statement about Daisy. I contented myself with a feeble inquiry as to whether they were going to join the company on the promenade.

"We are going aboard the yacht for luncheon," replied the doctor. "Miss Stancliffe has never been aboard the boat yet, and she is naturally anxious to see it. By the way, Daisy, why should we not ask Mr. Fenton to favor us with his company? I dare say he has nothing better to do this morning, and if he is interested in yachting he will certainly be pleased with the Golden Hawk."

There is no need to say with what joyous eagerness I

responded to the invitation. What puzzled me, however, was the way in which it was received by Daisy. She knit her brows for a moment as though trying to solve some knotty problem in her own mind. And then her face grew clear again, and without a word she went forward by the side of Branksome.

We found that the gig of the yacht was waiting for us at the landing-stage. Mr. Mauleverer and his two companions had gone on board in one of the ordinary fishing-boats, leaving the small gig, with its cushioned seats and neatly-dressed crew, for Daisy's accommodation.

There was a pleasant novelty for both of us in the situation as we sat there on either side of Branksome, who steered the boat. The oars of the four men who were rowing rose and fell with the precision of clock-work, and the light little craft was quickly urged over the placid waters of the bay towards the spot where the stately vessel lay in the full blaze of the sunshine. The cloud had passed from Daisy's face now. She was smiling as brightly as she had been wont to do during those happy days when we sat together beside the saloon ; but I could not avoid a dim consciousness of the fact that most of her smiles were given to Branksome rather than to me.

Never had I seen a more beautiful spectacle of its kind than that which I witnessed when I stepped upon the white deck of the yacht. The vessel was of great size—probably of not less than six hundred tons displacement. She had auxiliary steam-power, but the long sweep of her spars, the fine rake of her three masts, showed that it was to her sail-power that she chiefly trusted. Everything on board was in that exquisite

state of cleanliness which is never seen save on board of a man-of-war or a first-class yacht. The decks were as white as a well-scrubbed kitchen table; the brass of the bolt-pins, the binnacle, the two carronades forward shone in the sunshine like burnished gold. So did the gilding on the moulding of the deck-houses. Some luxurious lounging-chairs and soft rugs were scattered about in the stern of the vessel; whilst a smart quarter-master, in proper yacht uniform, kept watch in the ship's waist. Everything was in keeping with the wealth of its owner.

Daisy gave a cry of genuine delight when she surveyed the deck, and gazed up at the towering masts and rigging, which rose to a giddy height above her. She seemed to put off the weight of years in this atmosphere, and ran, or rather danced along the deck like a child, till she came to the door of the after-house. Then she stopped, raised her hands in wonder, and called me to her side.

The interior of this beautiful little room was indeed "a sight to see." The walls were panelled in old leather of a peculiar shade of orange, with rich designs in dead gold embossed upon it. Here and there was a tiny niche in which an exquisite bronze statuette was placed; and now and again the flat surface of the panels was broken by an old Venetian mirror, or a silver lamp of antique design. Curtains of some material of delicate texture hung in graceful folds by the side of the windows, the glass of which had a subdued tint that harmonized with the color of the walls. The furniture of the room was in keeping with the decorations. There were cabinets, richly carved, and couches covered with

oriental embroideries. Chairs, tables, rugs and stove—all gave evidence of a cultivated taste and a boundless wealth.

"Did you ever see anything so lovely?" cried Daisy, with all a young girl's delight in the beauty before her. "Who will use this room?"

Branksome laughed heartily. "My dear," he said, "every room on board is yours—this included. But your boudoir is down below, and, as a matter of fact, I believe the intention of the Duke of Cairngorm was to make this his smoking-room."

"Oh, how shameful!" cried the girl. "Surely a less beautiful room than this might do for people who want to smoke."

He looked at me with a broad smile upon his pleasant countenance at this ebullition of feminine feeling. I thought now that I had wronged him altogether in pronouncing against his mouth. All his features were in harmony, and I inwardly decided that he was one of the most fascinating men I had ever met with.

At that moment Mr. Mauleverer came on deck. He looked slightly surprised at seeing me there, but greeted me with cordial courtesy. It was evidently of Daisy, however, that he was chiefly thinking.

"Do you like the Golden Hawk, my darling?" he said, in tones which showed that even he felt some of the pleasurable excitement incident to the first introduction to a new toy. "I think the doctor deserves our thanks for having secured so beautiful a boat for us. What should we have done without him?"

"Quite as well as you have done with him, I reckon, Mauleverer," replied the doctor. "Don't give me any

credit for buying this ship. I heard it was for sale quite by accident, and of course when I saw it I felt it would be the very thing for you. But it was our friend Ben, there, who really settled the matter. I don't know anything about shipping, whilst he knows everything."

He pointed as he spoke to the man whose appearance I had liked so little when I saw him descending the stairs of the hotel by the side of the millionaire. Even now, when in recognition of Branksome's words he tried to look pleasant, I thought his face a peculiarly evil one.

"Oh, Flinter is well up in shipping, as we have all occasion to know," said Mauleverer. "But come, Daisy, you have not yet seen your palace below, and luncheon will soon be ready."

We all descended the broad winding stairs of the cabin companion-way, and once again Daisy's irrepressible cries of delight broke forth. It would have been difficult indeed for any one to restrain his admiration for that sumptuous interior. There were state-rooms furnished in delicate shades of color, decorated with works of art of priceless value, and fitted with every comfort and every luxury that the traveller could desire; there was a dining-saloon in which the stamped-leather decorations of the smoking-room on deck were reproduced, but in a different color. It was difficult to remember that we were on board a ship. This noble apartment looked as though it had been transferred bodily from some Venetian palace. There was a saloon, spacious, airy, elegant, in which the embroidered-silk panels of the walls vied with the covering of the couches,

and sumptuous carpets in the soft pile of which the foot sank an inch deep; and there was a boudoir in which the beauty and magnificence of this fairy palace seemed to have culminated. When we reached it I thought Daisy's face turned pale, as though she were almost frightened by the splendor of which she was now the mistress. In my own heart there was a heavy weight of pain. The more clearly the riches of Mauleverer were made apparent to me, the greater seemed to be the gulf by which I was cut off from him and all belonging to him.

We had not yet seen everything, however, that was to be seen on board this wonderful ship. When we left the boudoir, a short gangway, the walls of which were covered with green plush and glittered with the reflected light of mirrors, led us to a door which Mr. Mauleverer discovered was locked.

"What have we here?" he said, turning to Dr. Branksome.

"Oh! there you have the other side of the picture," was the reply. "You know, perhaps, that the old Duke had been in the navy in his youth, and that up to the end of his days he was a terribly severe disciplinarian. It seems that he always insisted upon having a punishment-cell made in his yachts, and I was told that he had even been known to confine his own sons when they happened to offend him."

"And is this the cell?" asked Mauleverer, pointing to the locked door.

"It lies beyond it," said the doctor. He produced a small key and opened the door. It showed us a continuation of the gangway; but now the walls of the

narrow passage were utterly without ornament. I placed my hand upon them, and found that they were lined with sheet-iron. At the end of the passage was another door, which Branksome opened. We saw dimly, for we were not provided with any lantern, a small square apartment, furnished in the plainest fashion—a striking contrast to the beauty and luxury of everything else. The place was cold and dark; I could feel Daisy, who was standing near me, shiver as she looked into the gloomy cell.

“I think I must have that dismal hole improved out of existence,” said the millionaire in his placid tones. We were all glad to turn our backs upon this specimen of ducal folly, and to make our way to the dining-saloon, where a luncheon in keeping with the splendors of the apartment was spread upon the table.

It must, I think, have been the feeling of oppression that was produced in my mind by the display of Mauleverer's overpowering wealth that prevented my enjoying that meal, even although it was the first I had ever taken in the company of the girl I loved. There was an additional reason, I think, which contributed, to a certain extent, to my embarrassment. I was seated opposite to Daisy at the round table which occupied the middle of the floor of the cabin. Again and again I tried to catch her eye, and to win some word from her lips. More than once she looked up, and I thought I had succeeded. But if for a moment her eye seemed to rest on my face, it wandered almost instantaneously to that of my next neighbor, the doctor, and then it sank once more upon her plate.

Branksome himself kept me involved in a bright talk,

in which not only the yacht and its glories, but the gayeties of Scarborough and the beauties of the Yorkshire scenery played a prominent part. By and by, however, he became confidential.

"You are looking at our friend over there, I see," he said, indicating the man whom I had heard called Flinter by Mr. Mauleverer. The truth is, I was looking at him because I had become conscious of the fact that he was staring at me with the disagreeable intensity of purpose which I had noticed when I was speaking to the millionaire in the hotel in the morning. "Rather a rough diamond, is he not? But a diamond nevertheless. He owes everything to our good host, and would go through fire and water to serve him."

I thought to myself that the man hardly looked equal to the character thus given him by the doctor, but I had learned to distrust first impressions, and I said nothing.

"Have you never heard of Mr. Fosdyke before?" whispered Branksome in my ear. "I am surprised. He is one of the very cleverest attorneys in London. You would soon hear all about him if you were to inquire at Bow Street or the Old Bailey."

Fosdyke must have heard his name when Branksome whispered it to me. At all events I caught the glitter of his *pince-nez* as his eyes were turned upon me, and once more I felt that I was being subjected to a scrutiny of unpleasant severity.

How I longed, as the well-drilled stewards passed round dish after dish and replenished our glasses with the champagne or claret which was provided in such profusion, for the peace of the days that were gone, when my darling was not set in this frame of almost regal splendor,

but when I was allowed to sit beside her with no jealous eye to keep watch between us, and no voice to contend with mine for the possession of her ear! Once or twice I caught a look in her face that seemed to tell me that some thought not unlike this was passing through her own mind; but if ever her spirit seemed to be flagging, and the color began to fade from her face, some sally from Branksome, the brilliancy of whose conversation was in keeping with the agreeable suavity of his manner, roused her attention and made her smile again.

I strove as we walked up from the shore in the late afternoon, after landing from the yacht, to secure a chance of speaking to her apart from the rest. But no such opportunity offered itself. She was monopolized by Fosdyke, and I had to content myself with the less seductive pleasures of Branksome's conversation.

CHAPTER V.

I MEET AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

BRANKSOME's conversation was not without its interest for me, vastly though I should have preferred to listen to the voice of Daisy. The doctor had, I fancied, some suspicion of the state of my feelings regarding the beautiful girl who had been so long a resident in his house. Whether he regarded me with approval as a possible suitor for her I could not tell. My instinct, indeed, told me that he could hardly look upon a com-

paratively poor man like myself as being a fitting husband for the heiress of the millionaire. But he allowed no sign of such a feeling to make itself manifest; and he talked about Daisy to me now, evidently because he felt that no other theme would interest me so deeply. What he had to say was indeed matter of interest to me. He told me that Miss Stancliffe was the daughter of Mauleverer's sister, who had married when very young. This I had known before. What I had not known was that there had been trouble in Mauleverer's family in consequence of the marriage.

"Mauleverer is a very proud man, though he does not wear his pride on his sleeve. Daisy's father was—well, he has been dead now for more than sixteen years, so why should I rake up scandal against him? Poor girl! She lost her mother within a few months of the death of her father. I had attended the mother in her last illness. I and my wife took pity on the child and adopted her, having no children of our own."

"But why did Mauleverer himself not adopt her at that time?" I asked.

He eyed me keenly for a moment before answering. "Mauleverer did not know of her existence at that time," he said. "Daisy's mother made me promise on her death-bed that I would never reveal the secret of the child's parentage to her brother."

"But you broke your promise in the end?"

"I did. Was I not right to do so? It is not an easy thing for a man of honor to prove unfaithful to such a trust as that. But I had to think of my duty to the living as well as to the dead. Think of my situation, my good young friend, and then say whether you con-

demn me. There was Mauleverer, a lonely man, whose life was without any joys, though his wealth was almost fabulous. And here was Daisy—growing up to be what you see her now, but in a poor man's house, with no prospect of ever being anything more than a poor man's wife—I winced as he uttered these words—"in an Australian town. Did I not do well to think of the living before the dead?"

"Yes; if you ask me that question, I can only answer with an emphatic affirmative."

"Mauleverer has found a new joy in life, in the society of his niece. He is completely wrapped up in her—as you may perceive."

"And are you still engaged in practice as a medical man?" I asked.

"No; I have dropped medicine. I lost my wife some years ago. It was nearly as great a loss to Daisy as to me. Since then I have been Mauleverer's agent. He is the most generous of men."

"And the other gentlemen—have they any business connection with him?"

I felt that I was trespassing upon Branksome's good-nature in subjecting him to these interrogatories. But he had shown himself so kindly and frank, and the subject was one of such intense interest to me, that I could not resist the temptation to inquire further regarding the exact relationship of Daisy's uncle with the men who had so suddenly appeared upon the scene.

"Fosdyke, as I told you, is the great London solicitor. He is our—that is Mauleverer's—legal adviser. As for Fiinter—well, I said he was a rough diamond, did I not? He has been for years employed upon Mr.

Mauleverer's largest sheep-run, though I believe that originally he followed the sea."

But we had reached the hall of the hotel by this time, and it was evident that I was about to be parted from the little company in which I was so deeply interested.

Daisy held out her hand when she said good-by to me; but I could not detect any returning pressure when I grasped it warmly. She looked very beautiful and sweet and sad. She went to her room, leaving me wholly unsatisfied.

And for the next two or three days I continued in the same mood. I saw Daisy daily, but never alone. Her most frequent companion was the doctor, who was always the same—bright, genial, full of witty and good-natured talk, but rather overpowering in the sense of authority with which he seemed to speak, and the completeness with which he appeared to have subjugated Daisy's will to his own. Then one day I heard from the lips of Branksome that the whole party were leaving Scarborough on the following morning. Their destination was the old Yorkshire house which had been purchased by Mr. Mauleverer as a home for himself and Daisy.

When I heard this piece of news, I looked eagerly at the girl to see how she regarded it. There was pain enough in my own face, I know, for in such a matter I could not dissemble. With the fierce joy of a lover, I saw that she too was troubled. But she said not a word. It was only in her beautiful eyes that I read that which, to some extent, comforted me.

But the next morning—the last morning of all—the morning which was to see an end forever of those happy

days that I spent with my love at Scarborough, I had the opportunity, for which I had longed so eagerly, of seeing her apart from those friends of hers, who seemed to have interposed themselves between us with such fatal effect.

Branksome and Flinter had gone to the yacht, which still lay idly in the bay, and Fosdyke was transacting some business of his own in the town. Mr. Mauleverer and Daisy came out of the hotel, as the former said, to take a last look at the beautiful place before starting for the railway-station where the whole party were to meet in less than an hour's time.

We walked to the little brow of the cliff, hard by the Grand Hotel, where there are a number of benches overlooking the sands and the valley, and here we seated ourselves. Daisy, as in the old days, sat between her uncle and myself. She was pale and nervous; but her smile was as sweet as it had ever been, and she was no longer mute. We talked of indifferent matters for a little time, and then, unable any longer to keep back the thought that was uppermost in my mind, I referred to their departure.

"I don't know," I said, "when we three shall meet again. Are you ever likely to return to Scarborough?"

Daisy blushed and said nothing. I saw that she was nervously playing with the tassel of her parasol.

"We must not wait till we return to Scarborough before seeing Mr. Fenton again," said Mauleverer to his niece. "He must come to Great Lorton Hall. You have never seen it, I think? Well, you will find it worth the trouble of a visit."

I had hardly words to express my gratitude. Every-

thing seemed clear before me, now that I was not to be cut off absolutely from further communication with Daisy. As for her, there was a look of unfeigned delight in her face also when she heard her uncle's proposal. But too quickly it faded away, and I observed again the anxious expression I had so often seen during the last few days. She knit her brows and seemed lost in thought.

I heard a footstep near us, and looked up. Branksome was standing before us, with a good-humored smile on his face, as his eye travelled from Daisy to myself. That was the end of my dream of joy at Scarborough.

It was a long and a sad week that followed their departure; but I am not going to inflict upon my readers an account of the love-sick moods in which I wandered about the places where we had been wont to meet, recalling, so far as I could, every separate occasion upon which we had been together, and every word that she had spoken. I only knew that I was more deeply in love with her than ever, and that nothing but the oppressive sense of her uncle's wealth kept me from telling my secret forthwith.

But one happy morning all my misery was brought to an end by the receipt of a letter—the first letter I had ever received in her handwriting—inviting me to Great Lorton Hall. Here it is:

GREAT LORTON HALL,

September 21st.

DEAR MR. FENTON,—My uncle asks me to say that he has not forgotten your promise to pay us a visit here. He wishes to know if it will be convenient to you to

come on Thursday next, and to stay a few days. I hope that you have no engagement to prevent your doing so. You will, I am sure, like to see this place. Both the house and the grounds are most romantic. There is a haunted chamber, but no ghosts have been seen as yet. Perhaps they are waiting till *you* arrive, in order to do honor to your visit. Indeed we shall all, both ghosts and living, be glad to welcome you. It is rather dull here. My uncle and Dr. Branksome are engaged all the morning over their business affairs, so that I see little of them. Mr. Fosdyke has returned to town. I assure you I feel the contrast between this place and Scarborough. There are no bright mornings here, spent in listening to the music of the band, and watching the sea in the bay.

Kindly let us know by what train you are to arrive, and you shall be met at the station. Both my uncle and Dr. Branksome desire to be remembered to you.

Believe me, dear Mr. Fenton,

Yours very sincerely,

DAISY STANCLIFFE.

There was not much in this letter, perhaps—not much on which to build a whole castle of delightful hopes. But such as it was, it served for me. I read it and re-read it a hundred times on that happy day, and pressed my lips again and again to the spot on which with her own hand she had signed her name.

The journey by rail from Scarborough to Great Lorton Hall—or rather to Little Lorton, the nearest railway-station on the North-Eastern line—is a long and tedious one; for though the distance between the two places as

the crow flies is a little more than thirty miles, there is no direct route. I learned, when I left Scarborough, that I must change carriages at Malton, and there intrust myself to the tender mercies of a local line, the trains on which, judging by the time-table I had studied beforehand, were limited to something like the speed attained by the old stage-coaches, before the locomotive had swept them out of existence.

As far as Malton my journey was swift and pleasant. I had a compartment to myself, and I spent my time in ruminating upon the past with all its memories of sweetness, and anticipating the future with the eagerness of a lover. The train into which I was transferred at Malton was a very short one. It was evident that the Lorton branch was not one of those for which the managers of the North-Eastern Railway deemed it necessary to make any very extensive provision.

I took my seat in the carriage to which the porter directed me, and awaited the departure of the train. There were few passengers besides myself, and apparently none who were likely to travel first-class. So, at least, I thought, until, almost at the moment when the train was starting, a man whose face I had seen only once before, but whom I was never likely to forget, suddenly emerged from a waiting-room, and advancing quickly towards the compartment in which I was seated, entered it and closed the door behind him. It was the person whom I had knocked down in the York railway-station on the day on which I first saw Daisy.

It would not have been easy then for me to leave the carriage, even if such a course had been consistent with my self-respect; I sincerely hoped, however, that my

old antagonist would not recognize me. The notion of travelling in his company was anything but pleasant. I saw, now that I was able to regard him more attentively than I could do in that hurried encounter at York, that he was about thirty years of age, and that, whilst his face bore the stamp of vicious self-indulgence, it was weak rather than wicked in its expression. He was dressed in clothes of fashionable cut; but they were somewhat the worst for wear.

When he entered the carriage he had lifted his hat to me, and had then seated himself in the farthest corner, where he appeared to be intently occupied in gazing out of the window upon the red tiles of the Malton houses. My hope that he did not know me again grew. It was soon dispelled. The moment the train had begun to move from the platform he turned towards me and, again lifting his hat, greeted me with a bow and an ironical smile. I said nothing, though I wondered much what his next move would be. I had not long to wait. He rose from the corner seat he had occupied and took that directly opposite to me.

"Well, my friend!" he said, still with the disagreeable smile upon his lips. "You did not expect to see me to-day, did you? I suppose that you and the rest of your gang thought that I was far enough away by this time—too far to disturb you in your operations."

He apparently expected me to make some reply to this, for he ceased to speak, and contented himself with staring into my face in an ostentatiously offensive manner.

"You really have the advantage of me," I said. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, indeed!" he laughed mockingly. "You did not even know what you were doing when you tried to murder me at York, I suppose."

"Don't talk nonsense, sir," I replied hotly. "You know that you struck me first."

"Possibly; and you, sir, know why you refused to allow me to enter that carriage in which I had a better right to be than yourself, or any other man living." He spoke with a savage emphasis which I should hardly have expected from one whose face betokened so much weakness of character.

What was his right to enter the carriage where Daisy was? I confess that my heart was beating more quickly as I put this question to myself.

"Oh, make no mistake!" he continued, warming at the sound of his own voice. "I know you all. I know your game. Shall I tell you what it is? Don't think that I am afraid of any of you—neither of you, nor of Branksome, nor of Flinter—no, nor of Miss Stancliffe either! It's a pretty name, Stancliffe, is it not? And she has a pretty face too. D—— her and all of you."

My blood grew suddenly hot. "If you say anything more about the young lady, sir, I shall do again what I did at York."

He laughed insultingly. "No you won't," he said, "Oh, no, you won't! Your game now is not to kill me, but to find out how much I know. Well, guess, and I'll tell you if you are right. But as for the young lady, leave her to me. Unless you are a greater fool than I take you to be, you know that my right to talk about her comes before yours."

Not for a moment did I credit the monstrous insinuation contained in his words. And yet there was a keen pain at my heart as I listened to him.

"Now look here," he continued ; "I want to tell you, Mr.—why, I don't even know your name. I never saw you before that day at York. You are the newest recruit, I suppose. But never mind your name. I've seen you with the whole gang,—with her, and with Flinter, and with all the rest,—and I know you are one of them. So just let me tell you that I am on your track. You thought it a clever thing to bury yourselves down in the wolds of Yorkshire, I suppose. You could do anything in a haunted old house, half a dozen miles from anywhere, and fear no awkward inquiries. Oh, I've seen the place, and I congratulate you on the taste you have shown. A capital place it is, upon my soul, for such work as yours."

"Either explain yourself," I cried angrily, "or be silent. You talk like a madman."

"Well, if I were mad it would not be wonderful ; but as it happens, I am as sane as you are. So I *will* explain myself, by G——, and clearly too. *There is murder going to be done at the place to which you are now going, and you know it!* Is that enough?"

I smiled incredulously. He really is mad, was the thought that flashed across my mind.

"Oh, you laugh ; but you will laugh in another way yet. I am on your track, I tell you, and when the time comes I'll strike. Tell that to your friends. Tell it to Branksome ; tell it to Flinter ; tell it to Fosdyke ; and, above all, tell it to Miss Stancliffe. Say that I told you that I'll bring every one of you—every one, mind—to

the gallows yet. Go on with your hellish plots, and see how they will succeed now that I'm kept out of them. That is my message to your friends. Take it to them without fail; tell it to them exactly as I have told it to you, and prepare, every one of you, for the worst!"

I had no doubt in my mind now as to his being mad. The change in his face would have alone convinced me of that fact. His eyes literally blazed with the passion that had possession of him. But his words had moved me also to something like passion.

"And who are you, sir, that you dare to talk in this way to me? What is all this raving about, and from what asylum have you escaped?"

In a moment he was perfectly calm. "You are a new hand at the business altogether," he said,—“just sworn in, eh?” with a malicious chuckle. “But if you want to know my name, I'll tell you. It is James Gregson, and James Gregson has given you your orders, which you'll please to carry out.”

The train was slackening speed at a wayside station a few miles from Malton. My companion nodded his head with emphasis, as though to enforce his words, and then, almost before I was aware, he had opened and closed the door, and I found myself alone again. Hardly had he gone than my attention was attracted by something lying on the floor—something which had evidently fallen from his pocket as he leaped from the carriage. I picked it up. It was a photograph of Daisy, apparently taken a year or two before. The likeness was unmistakable. I turned the card, and saw the name of a Sydney photographer printed upon it. There was something more. Faintly written in pencil

were the words "Daisy Stancliffe, alias ——." Some other name had been written after the "alias," but either purposely or by accidental friction—for the photograph had evidently, from its appearance, been carried in Gregson's pocket for a considerable period—the second name had been obliterated.

I had enough and more than enough to think of during the tedious remainder of my journey to Little Lorton.

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT LORTON HALL.

WHEN I alighted at the railway-station I saw a smart dog-cart standing by the roadside, and no sooner had I mentioned my destination to the porter than my portmanteau was placed in this vehicle. It was a drive of nearly four miles to Mauleverer's house. The country through which we passed looked beautiful in the early autumn dress which it now wore. There were distant lines of blue hills, and near at hand long meadows sloping to where a little river meandered down a gentle valley; with dark sketches of woodland interspersed here and there among the variously-colored patches which represented meadows and corn-fields.

I had asked the groom who drove me how Mauleverer and his niece were, and had discovered that he was too new a comer to be able to tell me anything that I did not know respecting them. I remained silent, there-

fore, during the greater part of the drive, contenting myself with listening to the larks, which were pouring forth their carols high up in the clear blue heavens, and with keeping a sharp lookout for the house where I was to meet my darling.

We came at last to a long avenue of venerable trees which lined the public road on either side. It was unusual to see trees like these planted by the side of a highway, and I could not resist the conclusion that this must have been the main approach to the hall in past times. It led, however, straight into a little village, consisting of not more than a score of ancient houses. Beyond the village I could see the river, and a bridge with a high-crowned arch, which I learned subsequently had accommodated all the traffic in that sparsely-inhabited district since the days of good Queen Bess. Beyond the bridge again all was open country. I looked round in bewilderment in search of the hall.

Suddenly I caught sight of it, standing hard by the road on the very edge of the little river. A great rookery of lofty elms had shielded it at first from my observation, so that I did not see it until we were almost at the door. We passed through a fine gateway, flush with the village street, and found ourselves in a large quadrangle, covered with grass, upon which one of the gabled ends of the hall looked out. There was another massive stone gateway opposite to that by which we entered this inclosure, and here the dog-cart stopped.

As I jumped to the ground, the iron gates of beautiful hammered metal were thrown open, and Daisy and her uncle stood before me. They gave me a cordial greeting, Mauleverer being, as usual, quietly courteous.

Daisy's face was radiant with a happiness that seemed to answer that which filled my own heart. I forgot everything about my strange companion in the railway-carriage, in the joy of the moment.

We were standing, I found, on a broad terraced walk which stretched along the main front of the hall and a warm garden-wall of red brick which was continued, for a hundred yards or more, beyond the end of the house itself. The hall was a venerable and imposing structure, built at different periods and in many different styles of architecture. The oldest portion dated from the reign of Henry the Seventh, and was a fragment of some ecclesiastical edifice which had been sacked and confiscated at the Reformation. The most modern part was that in front of which I now stood, and which had been erected in the reign of James the First.

There was something very striking both in the appearance and the situation of the house. It stood, as I have said, close to the village street; and yet the double gates, and the great walled quadrangle, to say nothing of the tall elm-trees, seemed to shut it off completely from the outer world. The river ran so close to its northern walls that there was hardly room to pass between the house and the edge of the stream. Here, on the south side, where I had met my host and his niece, the broad walk on which we stood was the only level piece of ground. Immediately beyond it the park-land rose steeply towards the sky-line.

A house at once beautiful and romantic, I thought, and unmistakably a house with a history. I could imagine that in the dark days of winter it wore a ghostly

aspect, as it rose amid the skeleton branches of the elms from the edge of the sluggish stream that swept past its walls. But to-day it had a pleasant appearance enough, for the sun was shining upon its richly-tinted brickwork, and upon the mullioned windows enriched with numberless heraldic devices in stained glass.

"Do you admire the house?" said Daisy, with a smile that had something in it of the pride of ownership.

"Indeed I do," I responded. "But is not the situation, so close to the village on one hand and to the river on the other, rather peculiar?"

"I thought so myself, at first," interposed Mauleverer, "but I find that we are as completely secluded here as if no village at all existed; and as to the river, you know there is no house so dry as one that stands on the banks of a stream. But come, Daisy, we must not keep Mr. Fenton standing here. Let us show him something more than the outside of the house."

We entered, through a quaint stone porch, a large hall, with immense open fireplace, low panelled roof of carved oak, and columns of the same wood supporting the ceiling. There were doors leading from this hall in almost every direction. The apartment itself was furnished in a style which corresponded with the architecture. There were heavily carved Jacobean chairs and tables, a lounge or two, some magnificent black oak cabinets, and an antique clock which would have created a furore if it could have been seen at Christy's. An immense staircase, up which it would have been an easy matter to drive the traditional coach-and-four, led from the hall to the drawing-room floor. The walls of the staircase were hung with splendid tapestry. From the

gallery to which the stairs gave access I was conducted by my host into the drawing-room, an apartment which corresponded in size with the great hall below. At either end of it were smaller rooms, one fitted as a boudoir, and the other as a library; whilst beyond these again were suites of spacious bedrooms, many with rudely carved walls of panelled oak, and others hung like the staircase with venerable tapestry.

I could not refrain from giving audible expression to the admiration with which I saw the noble dimensions of all the apartments, and the fine taste with which they were furnished.

"Yes," said Mauleverer, "it all does credit to the people who have made a ramshackle old house habitable in a wonderfully short space of time. When I saw it three months ago, nobody would have supposed that it could ever again be made fit to live in. Yet we find it comfortable enough now—do we not, Daisy?"

"Oh, it is a charming place," she answered. "But you know, uncle, I have already told you that for some things—such as brightness and life and society—I preferred the Grand Hotel at Scarborough."

"Yes, my dear, I know you are always throwing Scarborough in my teeth. Never mind; we shall see it again some day."

I had tried to catch Daisy's eye whilst her uncle was speaking, but she would not look at me.

"You have something here, at any rate," I said, "which you can't get at the Grand Hotel."

"What is that?" asked Mauleverer.

"A haunted room—Miss Stancliffe told me of it. I suppose you have not seen the ghost yet?"

"You do not believe in such nonsense?" said the millionaire.

"If I did, I should not like to acknowledge it in the present day," I replied.

"Nobody has seen it yet," said Daisy, with an air of mock solemnity; "but we all believe in it—all but my uncle and Dr. Branksome. And do you know that, if you will not be afraid, you are to sleep in the haunted chamber? It is the best bedroom in the whole house."

Afraid! I should have been a poor creature, indeed, if in the presence of the girl I loved, and as I stood in the full sunshine which was streaming through the painted windows from the cheerful day outside, I had for an instant admitted the thought of fear to my heart.

"Oh, nothing could be better than that," I cried, with a laugh; "I shall be able to investigate a genuine case of ghost-seeing for myself. It is not often a man has that privilege."

"And very seldom that he has it under such exceptional circumstances!"

I turned with a sudden start; for it was Branksome who had spoken. He had joined us unperceived as we stood chattering in the gallery at the head of the great staircase. He shook hands with me in a friendly fashion, and then, continuing his speech, said, "You will not only sleep in the haunted room to-night,—that is, if you are not afraid,—but in one which I am told nobody has ventured to sleep in for more than a century."

"So much the better. I ought to have a story to tell to-morrow."

"Yes," said Daisy, "we shall think very poorly of

your imagination if you cannot make our nerves tingle at breakfast-time with the horrors you have to relate."

"And may I see the torture-chamber?" I asked, resolved to keep up the jest.

"Oh, certainly!" said Mauleverer. Even his usually equable temperament, which was pervaded at most times by a mild melancholy, seemed to have caught the spirit of the joke. But, with his accustomed kindness, he added, "Perhaps you may not like the room when you have seen it. I don't know that it is altogether kind to ask you to sleep in it—it may be damp, or disagreeable in other ways, you know; so if you would prefer another—"

"But, my dear Mr. Mauleverer, there is no other room in the house which I shall prefer to this. I shall like it, I am sure, above all things."

And having said this, I started off with the rest of the merry little party to look at my destined dormitory. The room, I discovered, did not lie on the same floor as the drawing-room, on which most of the sleeping-chambers were to be found. We passed along a corridor from which a number of bedrooms opened, until we came to a heavy oaken door, black with age, which barred one end of the passage. On opening this we found ourselves on a landing in another staircase—worm-eaten and silent, which descended into black depths below us, and wound its way above our heads for several flights. Up this staircase we went, still gayly. More than once we found an oaken door like that by which we had come upon the stair; but in every case the door was heavily barred and padlocked. Some faint perception of the fact that the haunted chamber

had other disadvantages besides the presence of a supposititious ghost began to enter my mind.

"You will be quiet enough here, at any rate," said Branksome. "Unless the ghost comes to trouble you, there will be nothing to disturb your sleep."

"And I suppose I shall at least hear the ghost—in the shape of rats."

"Rats!" cried Daisy. "I don't think they have mounted as high as this, but in the kitchens they are to be found in legions and armies. Every house has its special drawback. It is not the ghost that is the drawback here—it is the rats."

"You will need to summon the Pied Piper to your aid," I said.

"Better try strychnine!" was Branksome's commentary on my jocular remark.

But we had reached a broad landing at the top of the lonely flight of stairs. I could see that we were in one of the more remote wings of the house; for the windows which gave us light looked down upon the sullen river.

"Here we are," said the doctor, who now took the lead, probably because Mauleverer was breathless after his climb.

We entered a small anteroom, the walls of which were panelled. There was a quaint old fireplace in one corner of the apartment, and the mullioned window gave comparatively little light. The room had been newly furnished in the French fashion, with heavy chairs, gilded mirrors and girandoles, a beautiful ormolu writing-table, a richly carved bookcase, and all the accessories of a delightful little salon such as a bachelor might rejoice to own.

A curtain of velvet hung over the doorway which led from this antechamber into the sleeping-room. There was nothing ghostly here. It was a large, bright, airy apartment, with a big window commanding a matchless prospect along the valley. Like the sitting-room it was furnished in the French fashion, and all the appointments were sumptuous. The only feature of the room that seemed to suggest the idea of age was the embossed leather which, hanging heavily from the ceiling, covered all the walls.

"I think you will agree with me, Mr. Fenton," said Branksome, "that a man has no occasion to complain of his quarters here. This is by far the finest room in the house, to my thinking. Just look at the view from the window. It is rather curious, by the way, that these should be the original hangings of the room. All the tapestry downstairs has been bought in Paris within the last two months; but this old leather is genuine. It must have covered these walls for a couple of hundred years at least."

We all turned to admire the hangings. The gilding had nearly disappeared from the surface of the leather, but the designs embossed upon it were still plainly to be seen; they were elaborate and beautiful. Nothing, I felt, could be better than the rooms allotted to me; and yet, even then, I confessed in my innermost heart that I hardly liked the way to them.

It was five o'clock, and when, our inspection of the noble old house being finished, we went down to the great hall, we found tea awaiting us.

"Had you a pleasant journey?" It was Branksome who put the question to me.

I colored. To tell the truth, I had forgotten all about the journey and my strange adventure in the excitement of my arrival at Great Lorton and the joy of Daisy's presence. Now it all came back to me, however. I hesitated in visible confusion, painfully conscious of the fact that Branksome was regarding me steadily.

"It was not so pleasant as it might have been," I said at last. "I had a disagreeable companion for a part of the way."

At that moment, to my great relief, Daisy proposed that she should show me her flower-garden whilst there was still light by which to see it. She hastily threw a wrapper of some kind around her shoulders, and led the way bareheaded. I followed her, delighted at the thought that at last I should see her for a few moments alone; for Mauleverer, and Branksome remained behind.

The flower-garden was at the end of the broad walk, which passed along the front of the hall. We entered it through a door in an old stone wall. It seemed to me that everything at Great Lorton was cut up by walls or barred by doors. I had seen nothing like it before. But within the garden, which was spacious and well laid out, there were no signs of restricted liberty. Everything here was beautiful.

Daisy was in the best of spirits, and pointed out to me, with all the pride of a proprietor, the lovely autumn flowers which were still in bloom, and the promise which the garden gave of further loveliness in the coming summer. But by and by her spirits seemed to flag, and she ceased to speak. The truth was, that from the moment when we entered the garden I myself had hardly uttered a syllable. We moved slowly along the

winding walks, now speechless and self-conscious. Oh, the joy of being near her—of hearing the rustle of her dress, the sound of her foot upon the path; oh, the delight of being allowed once more to look into that face, dearer to me than the face of any other of God's creatures!

But the silence was becoming oppressive. I broke it at last with an effort. "You are glad that I came?" I said.

With eyes full of tenderness, and a smile that made her face as an angel's, she turned and looked at me. She did not speak, but I had my answer, and my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss which it had never known before.

She had plucked a lovely tea-rose that we had found lingering on one of the trees.

"Will you give me the rose?" I said.

As she gave it to me our hands touched, and even at the same moment our eyes met, and in an instant she was clasped in my arms, and I had printed the first kiss of love upon her fair cheek.

There were a few moments of silence—of silence broken only by her sighs, which sounded in my ears almost like sobs. She did not attempt to release herself; but at last, in answer to my passionate prayer, she slowly raised her face, radiant with love and tenderness, towards mine, and our lips met in a long kiss, in which our very souls seemed to mingle.

Presently she slowly drew herself away from me, though she still left her hand in mine.

"How did you know," she said in a voice that struggled against the conflicting emotions in her heart, "how did you know that I loved you?"

"My darling," I cried, "I only knew that *I* loved *you*, and that life without you would be utter misery to me. But do you love me, Daisy—do you, dearest?"

"Ah, yes!" she said, in a voice the tender cadences of which sounded like music wafted from some far-off heaven, "I love you. I cannot help it. But it is wrong, I fear. They will never allow us to meet again."

"I know," I said, with a bitter heart, "they will say that it is your uncle's riches that I love, and they will despise me as a fortune-hunter."

"No, no. They must know you better than that. It is not that. But I know they will never allow us to see each other any more when they discover—ah, there is some one calling!"

She started from me in affright, and answered quickly. It was Branksome's voice which we heard.

"How now, young people!" he cried, in a tone of banter. "The sun has been set this half-hour or more, and you can hardly appreciate the flowers in the dark. Besides, it is almost time to dress for dinner, and your uncle has been asking for you, Daisy."

There was nothing in the tone of his voice to indicate that he had any suspicion as to the reason why we had lingered so long in the garden. We walked silently beside him. When we reached the door, he suggested that it would be well to lock it now, as no one was likely to return to the garden from the house that night. But even as he pulled the key from his pocket a voice I had learned to know and hate saluted us. It was that of Flinter.

"Don't lock me in all night, please," he cried, in gruff tones. "I've been just looking round a bit.

There's plenty of room for improvement here, it seems to me."

He took no notice either of Daisy or myself, and there was something in his manner that was almost insolent. In the dim twilight I eyed him angrily, and longed for a chance of quarrelling with him. But I felt a light touch upon my arm, and the next moment I saw that Daisy, in her white dress, had passed through the gate. I followed her instantly.

"Hush!" she said in agitated tones. "Take no notice of that man. He is dangerous." And before I could recover from my surprise she had entered the hall, where her uncle awaited her.

Our dinner was not quite such a success as I had anticipated. Mr. Mauleverer, it is true, was courteous as ever; and Branksome talked, with that fulness of knowledge which distinguished him above any other man I had ever met, on many different topics. But Daisy had a headache, and sat with a pale face at the head of the table; whilst I was overweighted by the joy that filled my heart as I thought of her avowal in the garden. There were no signs of Flinter. It was evident that at Great Lorton Hall he was not allowed to associate with the millionaire on the terms of equality which were permitted on the yacht.

After dinner we went upstairs to the drawing-room, but that apartment was too vast to be comfortable. A fire had been lighted in the library adjoining it, and we resorted thither, and spent some time in examining a collection of priceless etchings which had been supplied—I could not help thinking—by the contractors who furnished the hall. Mr. Mauleverer was a man of fine

tastes, but he could not be called a cultivated person, and I think he had very little idea of the value of those matchless impressions of the Dutch masters, from Rubens downwards, which none but a millionaire could have acquired. I was allowed no opportunity of exchanging a word with Daisy until she was leaving the room for the night. Then, as I handed her the candle I had lighted, I murmured two words only in her ear, "My darling." She looked up at me with a faint smile, and let her hand rest a moment in mine as we said good-night.

"Will you smoke?" asked Mauleverer, and on my replying in the affirmative he led me to a comfortable smoking-room, where I found everything needful provided for us. Branksome did not appear. I had already learned, however, that he was no smoker, and I was not therefore surprised at his absence. Mauleverer himself smoked little, and long before I had finished my cigar his cigarette had been consumed. With an apology on the score of his delicate health he by and by left me to myself.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAUNTED ROOM.

I AM afraid I sat longer than I should have done in the luxurious little smoking-room. It was not the admirable quality of Mauleverer's cigars that chained me to the spot. My mind was full of all the incidents of the day, and I slowly pondered on them as the fragrant

clouds of tobacco-smoke rose above my head. My predominant feeling was one of almost extravagant delight. "She loves me! She loves me!" was the thought that most frequently came uppermost in my mind. But ever and anon there shot across the broad current of my joy a sinister sense of doubt and apprehension. I remembered the inscription on the back of Daisy's portrait, "Daisy Stanccliffe, *alias* ——." I recalled, not now with the scornful indifference that I had felt in the train, the wild words of Gregson, "There is murder going to be done at the place to which you are going, and you know it." If that were true, then, at least, I thought I did know by whom the murder would be wrought. It would be the man Flinter, whom Daisy had just described to me as dangerous. Aye, and once or twice I remembered how Gregson had involved all of us, myself and Branksome and even Daisy herself, in a common condemnation with this ruffian. I knew how guiltless I myself was of all criminal plots against any human being. But I was not more certain of my own innocence than I was of Daisy's. Let me write that here with emphasis, so that, blamable as I may have been in many matters, I shall at least be free from blame in this.

But from all these wild and wandering fancies my mind ever returned to the same delightful thought of Daisy's love. That sooner or later she should be mine, I was resolved. As for Mauleverer's millions, let them perish with him, if they were to stand between us.

I was aroused from a long deep reverie by the silvery tone of the clock which stood on the mantle-piece of the room. I looked up, and to my surprise saw that it was

one o'clock. I had spent more than an hour by myself after Mauleverer had left me.

There was all through the house that dead and solemn silence which is never so complete as in a large country house at that hour of the night. I could feel, as it were, all around me the great empty rooms, and the long corridors with their mysterious windings, and the worm-eaten staircases, up and down which those who had been dust now for hundreds of years had once passed in the flush of life and health.

There was not a sound, I say, to break the silence; and yet as I listened that very silence seemed to become vocal, and all the air was filled with one loud rhythmic cry that struck upon my tingling nerves with a distinctness which spoken words could never have attained. "There is murder to be done here; murder, murder, murder!" That was what the awful silence of the great house seemed to say to me. I knew that it was nothing more than the effect of the imagination due to the excitement of the past day. Yet I started up in nervous terror, and lighted my candle, hardly daring to look behind me as I turned from the room to seek my chamber.

Where or how I got wrong I hardly knew. I found presently, however, that I had missed the corridor through which I had to pass on my way to the staircase leading to my room. I turned into another passage, thinking it might lead me in the right direction. As I was passing a door in this corridor, I distinctly heard a voice raised as in anger. It was Flinter who was speaking.

"Curse him! what has brought him here to meddle

with everything! You may believe me or not, as you like, but if that infernal boy is not put out of the way, and quickly too, we may as well give up the game."

I heard no more. There was a faint murmur as though some one responded to Flinter, but I could catch no intelligible sound, so I passed on, hardly thinking for the moment that what I had heard could have any reference to myself. The next turn brought me in some inexplicable fashion to the head of the great staircase, from which spot it was an easy matter for me to find my way to my bedroom.

I closed the outer door opening upon the lonely stair that gave access to my apartment, and looked around me. I was in the delightful little sitting-room beyond which the bedroom was dimly visible through an open door. A fire had been lighted in both rooms, but in neither case was it now burning. The black ashes contrasted drearily with the sumptuous furnishing of the two apartments. I did not linger in the outer room. I crossed the threshold of the haunted chamber, and closing the door, began at once to prepare for bed.

And now, in the very dead of the night, and cut off by long galleries and lonely staircases from any other human being, with nerves shaken too by all the exciting incidents of the day, I first realized the fact that to sleep in this room with all its memories and traditions was by no means so pleasant an adventure as it had seemed a few hours earlier. What was the ghost which was said to haunt the place? I sat down and tried to recall the legend as I had heard it after dinner. A woman, false and cruel, who had once been the mistress of the hall, kept the young heir a captive in this

very room for many years, in order that she might substitute her own child for him. In this lonely chamber—so the story ran—the captive boy had only one visitor: it was his half-brother, the child for whose sake his own life was doomed to misery. And the two had learned to love each other, so that day by day the young favorite would creep up the dark staircase and find admission to the chamber where the true heir was imprisoned. One day the younger child was playing as usual in the room when something attracted him to the window. It was open, for it was in the summer-time. He peeped out and saw his mother standing below him. With a cry of joy he leaned out of the window, clapping his hands; and in a moment he had overbalanced himself, and had fallen a crushed and lifeless mass at the feet of the cruel woman who had sinned for him in vain. A few hours later, when the particulars which the shock of so terrible a tragedy had produced had died away, the lady climbed the dusty oaken staircase and entered the room where the heir lay, overwhelmed with grief and horror at the fate of his little playmate. Dark vengeance was on her face—the vengeance of a woman who has lost all that made life worth living, and who burns with a desire to make every other woman childless. There was the sudden glitter of a knife, a sharp cry of terror from the captive, and then silence. In the morning the little prisoner was found lying dead, stabbed to the heart, whilst beside him crouched his step-mother, a gibbering maniac.

This was the tragedy of my room. It was the ghost of the lady that was said to haunt it; though there were legends which told how the cry of a child, a long low

wail of misery, had been heard in the silent night echoing through the corridors in the deserted wing in which the chamber stood. I glanced round upon the rich hangings of the wall. Had they seen that awful tragedy enacted? I remembered that for scores of years, perchance a century, no one had slept in this room before to-night. It needed all my scepticism in regard to supernatural appearances to nerve me to that outward show of indifference which a man, even when no one is near him, regards as essential to the preservation of his self-respect. Before I extinguished the lights I drew aside the curtain of the window, the outline of which was made visible against the background of sky. Then I hastily sought my bed, and tried to compel myself to sleep.

Far sooner than I had expected, sleep came. It seemed, indeed, that I had hardly laid my head upon the great square French pillow, when I was wandering away in dreamland. There was nothing bright or pleasant about my dream, however. I was in bed, it seemed to me, in the haunted room; but I was lying wide-awake, and all my senses were so acutely alive that I was able to hear the faint ticking of the clock in the great entrance-hall, far, far away from this remote wing; and whilst conscious that the darkness of night brooded all around me, I found that everywhere I could see as plainly as in the daylight. Nay, more plainly, far; for now doors and walls, and heavy hangings of tapestry and leather, no longer obstructed my vision. My eye pierced through all these things, and revealed to me everything which lay beyond.

What was it that—in that strange phantasmagoria of

sleep—first attracted my attention?—Far away in some distant part of the great mansion I heard, with that preternaturally acute sense of hearing with which I now seemed to be endowed, a door stealthily opened. Some one peeped out into the darkness of the corridor. It was Flinter—or rather it was Flinter's face—that I saw, through all the intervening doors and walls and passages, as I lay here in my bed in the haunted room. But it was Flinter's face—cruel, brutal, vicious—upon the body of a woman; and I knew that I was looking upon the lady who had done murder here, where I lay bound in the hideous spell of this nightmare vision.

Slowly the figure advanced. He—she—it—I knew not what to call it, so frightfully compounded was it of the real Flinter and the legendary woman—came slowly down the corridor, something bright and sharp glittering in its bony hand. Though no lamp was lighted anywhere, it advanced with unfaltering certainty of step, turning round many a corner, now opening a door and passing a ghostly chamber into the gallery beyond, now climbing a stair, and now pausing for a moment to feel the keen edge of that flashing blade, and to indulge in a chuckle of devilish malice. I knew that some mysterious agency had lifted me from my bed, had carried me down all these intricate stairs and corridors, and had placed me by the side of the apparition. I was following it unseen and silently; conscious, too, that I had been suddenly endowed with the power of flying, and that at any moment I could soar into the air above me.

Suddenly I found that the figure had reached a door which I recognized as the outer door of my own apartments. We seemed to pass through the stout oaken

barrier, and across the little sitting-room, and then in an instant we had entered the sleeping-chamber, and stood by the side of the bed. Some one was quietly sleeping, with his head half buried in a great square pillow of down. I looked to see who the sleeper was, and with a thrill of horror I saw it was myself who was lying there. Myself? No, I was brooding, unseen even by the fearful thing that I had been following, above the bed, hovering in mid-air, whilst my body lay below me, motionless, as under the spell of some mysterious trance.

The horrid thing with the knife looked down with a grin of cruel delight upon my defenceless form. It was Flinter now that I saw. That woman's disguise had been cast aside, and the ruffian stood there in his ordinary attire, with all the mean and brutal lines upon his face plainly visible. He looked at me closely for a moment, then softly he turned down the covering and placed his hand upon my heart. With the spell of an awful terror resting upon me, I watched him from above. Quickly he withdrew his hand, and then I saw the other arm upraised, the knife glittering in his grasp. I tried to scream; I tried to throw my impalpable self between the assassin and my helpless body. I was powerless, frozen, lifeless. The knife descended like a bolt from heaven, and I saw it buried deep in my heart.

I awoke from my terrible dream bathed in a chill perspiration, and shivering from head to foot with such a terror—cold and ghastly—clutching at my heart as I had never felt before. I knew that at the last moment, as the knife fell, the spell of silence had been broken, and I had uttered a cry. That or some other sound

was still ringing in my ears. What was it? I knew that I had heard something—something which had aroused me from that fearful nightmare—and that it had been close to my ear; but in the agitation of my mind at that first moment of my return to consciousness I could not recall what it was that had aroused me.

And then in an instant it all flashed upon my mind. I had heard a faint rustling as of a woman's dress sweeping across the floor, and then there had been a sharp sound, such as that which is made by the quick closing of a tightly fitting door. Yes: now that I was wide-awake, I was conscious of the fact that, if that hideous fancy which had taken possession of my brain whilst I slept was but the vision of a nightmare, I had at least been visited in my chamber during my slumbers.

I sprang from my bed, and, running to where I had seen a box of matches, struck a light, and then turned to survey the room. All was as it had been when I had lain down to sleep an hour before. All? I looked round upon those sombre walls through which, in my terrible dream, my vision had pierced with ease. They gave me no hint of the secrets which they held. The door of the room was locked on the inside, just as I had left it. No one could have vanished through that substantial barrier without leaving some trace of his passing. I felt the leathern hangings of the walls. Behind them the wainscot gave forth in response to my blows a muffled hollow sound; but it told me nothing. And yet, that some one had been with me in the room, I felt certain. I no longer had any superstitious apprehensions. It was no ghost, I was well assured, that had visited my bedside. I shuddered at the thought that

perhaps my dream had been only too real, and that it was Flinter who, by some mysterious means, had found admission to my chamber—Flinter, whose last words, as I accidentally overheard them when I retired to rest, had pointed clearly, as I now felt, to my own removal. It might be that he had been alarmed by my sudden cry at the moment when he was about to dispatch me, and had retired by some mysterious doorway—such as I was well assured existed—to wait until I was again asleep.

Instinctively I approached the bed, candle in hand, and examined the pillow where a deep impression marked the place where my head had been laid. I almost thought that I could see myself lying there, as I had done in my vision—unconscious, silent, helpless, beneath the knife of the villain. I shuddered at the thought; but even as I did so, I found something else to startle me. Lying on the bedclothes, as it seemed to me, at the very place where, if I had still been sleeping, they would have covered my heart, was a knife. It was not the long, keen, glittering, well-polished deadly blade of my vision. It was old-fashioned, rusted, of quaint shape, with a clumsy handle of bone, curiously carved and stained. I took it up in wonder. It seemed to me that the handle was still warm from the grasp which had held it a few moments before. What did it portend? How came this fearful confirmation of my dream into the room where it had certainly not been when I retired to rest? What meant all the mysteries that seemed to haunt this house, and to envelop all the dwellers in it?

I stood, candle in hand, by the side of the bed, asking myself these questions, and as I did so my eye suddenly lighted upon something which was lying, apparently

where it had slipped from the sloping pillow, on the sheet below. It was a scrap of paper—a note! I seized it with eager hands, and in an instant all the craven fears that had been creeping into my heart vanished. I forgot ghosts and nightmares, and even the hateful Flinter himself with his deadly knife, and with a low cry of delight I pressed the little note to my lips, for I saw that it bore my name in the handwriting of my darling.

With a trembling hand I opened it and read the message which it conveyed to me—a message written hurriedly in pencil.

“O my darling,” she said, “it is hard, hard; but we must part, just when I have found you. I knew how it would be if it was discovered. I knew we should never be allowed to meet again if they could help it. You must leave this place to-morrow—for your own sake even more than for mine. But do not suppose I shall forget you. I shall be free some day, I hope. God grant it may come soon! Whenever it comes, you may depend upon me. Do not go far away, dearest, if you still care for me. If you go to Scarborough I shall know where you are; and that at least will be some comfort. Good-by, darling, for I shall not be allowed to say it by word of mouth. But remember that I shall always be true to you.—DAISY.”

There was a postscript written in characters so straggling that it was clear that they had been penned under the influence of some intense agitation. “I have had a terrible scene with my uncle. He came to me when he left you. I could never have thought that he would have been so cruel.”

How the long remainder of that night passed I can-

not tell. I was almost stupefied by this crowning misfortune. The secrets of the haunted chamber no longer troubled me; nay, I cared nothing now for Flinter's hardly concealed animosity. The thought that overbore all others was that, as Daisy herself had put it, I had found her but to lose her. In comparison with this, all nightmare visions, secret visitations of my bedroom, and even portents like the rusty knife which had so mysteriously been placed upon my bed, seemed of no consequence. I dressed and sat in dreary suffering, waiting for the coming of the morn.

Much sooner than might have been expected in the ordinary course of things, I heard a servant moving in the outer room. I was aware that a fire was being lighted, and by and by the rattle of cups and saucers told me that a table was being laid in the room. I was somewhat surprised, as I had been given to understand on the previous night that we would all breakfast together in the hall below. I waited impatiently to learn my fate.

I was not very long in suspense. Long before eight o'clock there was a tap at the door, and I opened it to admit the servant who came laden with hot water and the necessaries for my bath. He stared in amazement when he saw that I was up and dressed. It may have been that part of his astonishment was due to my appearance. I was conscious of the fact that the experiences of that terrible night had given me a face so haggard and worn that I might have been years older than I looked when I retired to rest.

He made a few inquiries as to the services I required, and then, in a somewhat hesitating manner, as though

he were aware that he had unpleasant news to communicate, he said,

“Your breakfast, sir, will be served in your own sitting-room in half an hour, or sooner, if you wish it; and my master has ordered me to tell you that you will find a letter from him on the breakfast-table.”

Then he retired respectfully.

Too well I knew what the letter would say. I was utterly jaded and dispirited by that night of agony. And yet, when I thought that I was about to be expelled from the house which sheltered the woman I loved, and that I should be compelled to leave her in the society of such a man as Flinter, I felt ready to do anything and defy everybody if I might but be with her.

I bathed and redressed wearily, and then in the sitting-room I read the letter addressed to me from Mr. Mauleverer. It was very courteous, but very cold and emphatic. The writer said that he had learned with surprise and pain that I had been guilty of conduct which he would never have thought of attributing to me. I had, in effect, made love to his niece—his adopted daughter—the lady who was, as everybody knew, his destined heiress. He could have forgiven this conduct on my part—strongly as he must have objected to any marriage between me and Miss Stancliffe—if I had acted openly, as he should certainly have expected me to do. But in seeking surreptitiously to win the affections of his niece I had adopted a course which he refrained from characterizing, because he had no wish to wound my feelings by the use of strong language, but which, he regretted to say, made it impossible that he should continue to receive me as his guest.

Orders had been given for the brougham to be ready for me at nine o'clock precisely, and it would take me to Lorton Station in time for the express train. He concluded by wishing me a polite but very formal farewell.

In my rage, humiliation, and bitterness I sat down and dashed off one of those impetuous letters which are only penned by young men in love. In it I repudiated with scorn the notion that the wealth of which he was unhappily possessed—so I put it—had anything to do with my love for his niece, and while expressing my regret that I had not secured his approval of my suit before I spoke to Daisy, I declared emphatically that, loving her as I did with my whole heart, I should never willingly relinquish the hope of making her my wife.

Possibly there might be other phrases in this letter that were calculated to wound the natural pride of a man like Mauleverer. I hardly know whether this was so or not, for it was written whilst my mind was agitated by a whirlwind of passion and grief. Be this as it may, however, when, by and by, I was taking my seat in the brougham, prepared to quit Great Lorton Hall with crestfallen head and sullen heart, I received a letter from one of the servants, on opening which I found that my own letter had been returned to me without a word. In my rage and indignation at this insult, I tore the unlucky epistle to pieces, and, as I stamped upon the fragments where they lay upon the terrace, I literally shook the dust of Great Lorton Hall from off my feet.

One long lingering look back I gave when the brougham mounted the hill. I could not see the house, enclosed within its red brick walls. But here were the

great elm-trees, among which the rooks were circling in the clear morning air. I thought that Daisy perchance heard their hoarse cries. When should we be so near to each other again? My heart was filled with a deadly sense of pain, and I felt my eyes, too, filling with unbidden tears.

Two souvenirs I took with me from my visit to the hall. One was the rusty, old-fashioned knife I had found upon my bed; the other, the precious note in which Daisy confessed her love for me.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. FLINTER AGAIN.

THE season was beginning to wane at Scarborough. Harding had left the Grand Hotel some time before I paid my strange visit to Great Lorton, and I knew none of the persons who were now staying there. My position was not an enviable one, now that I was back again in the big house. It was bad enough to be oppressed by that sense of mystery which enveloped everything connected with the hall and with Mauleverer. It was still worse to be reminded by everything around me of those happy days when Daisy and I had been together, and when she had first learned to love me. There was the very spot in the hall of the hotel where I used to take my stand each morning, awaiting the appearance of her and her uncle on their way to the saloon. There were the seats, occupied by strangers now, where we

had spent so many never-to-be-forgotten hours together; and there, quietly riding at anchor in the bay, was the beautiful yacht which I had learned to hate as one of the tangible proofs of that wealth which divided me from the niece of the millionaire. I waited with an impatience that I could hardly control for news of my darling.

It came sooner than I expected, in the shape of a letter from Dr. Branksome, enclosing one for me from Daisy herself. Need I say that I read the latter first?

"My dearest friend," she wrote, "I must send you a few words, if it were only to tell you that I am well. I must not say much, for I feel that I am doing wrong even in sending you this short message. But Dr. Branksome has told me that he thinks I may do so, and much as I have loved my uncle, I cannot yield myself completely to his will in this. Ah, you cannot tell what a change there is in him since this has happened! I cannot account for it. He is so different from what he has ever been before—so utterly unlike his old self—that it almost seems to me that something has happened to transform his whole character, and to change the love he once professed for me into hate. I am trying to bear it patiently, for I owe so much to him. But sometimes it is very hard. Dr. Branksome has been my friend through it all; though even he is compelled, when my uncle is present, to hide his sympathy with us both. I don't know how it will all end; but I do want you to feel that you can trust me. I shall be true to you through everything. Please, dearest, do not believe any evil you may hear of me. I know I have my enemies, and I can't help thinking that they

are your enemies also. If you hear tales about me, rest assured that if I have erred at all it is from my love for you, and that nothing, neither life nor death, shall ever make me false to you. I cannot write more; I am ashamed to send you this; but I think I know you well enough to be sure that you will understand all that I want to say to you, even though I have not the power of saying it aright; and that you will believe in your heart of hearts that I love you above anything and everything else in this world."

I was touched and consoled by the frank and outspoken language of my darling. It was what I should have expected from one so full of noble impulses, so little given to consider the mere conventionalities of every-day life. I felt that she must indeed love me with all her soul, or she could not have addressed me in such a strain as this.

Branksome's letter, too, brought me some consolation, though it also caused me uneasiness regarding Daisy. It was as follows:

"DEAR MR. FENTON: You will forgive me for writing to you on a subject which I have no doubt you regard as too sacred to permit of any intrusion by a stranger. But I have myself loved—once; and I trust that it is not as a stranger that you look upon one who so long stood in the place of a father to Daisy. I was grieved beyond measure, my dear friend, by the manner in which your visit to this place terminated. It was, indeed, an unexpected blow. As an older man than yourself, you will, I know, forgive me if I say that I cannot but feel that it would have been better if, before speaking to Daisy, you

had taken me — or, still better, Mr. Mauleverer — into your confidence. But I acquit you entirely of any worse fault than that of having acted, as young lovers are so apt to do, upon impulse. I fear, however, that our good host takes a much darker view of your conduct. I have reasoned with him and expostulated with him warmly on the subject; but so far without effect. I tried to speak a word to you on the morning when you left us, but I had been forestalled by the steps taken to hasten your departure. I can only say that you may count on me as a friend, and that I shall try, for Daisy's sake as well as for your own, to put an end to the present distressing state of affairs. She is a brave girl, but she is a very proud and a very passionate one also; and I sometimes tremble when I think what may be the consequences of the cruel and incessant persecution to which she is just now being subjected by a man who seems to have forgotten that she is the only creature left in this world who is bound to him by the ties of consanguinity.

“I shall hope to see you before many days have passed, and then I can tell you more. You will, I suppose, be staying at the Grand Hotel. I shall find you out there before long. In the mean time, believe me, yours most sincerely,

FRANCIS BRANKSOME.”

Another week passed without my hearing anything directly or indirectly of the occupants of Great Lorton Hall. My mind, which had been soothed by the contents of Daisy's letter, was again becoming agitated by the fever of impatience and uncertainty. I had sent a letter—a long letter, in which my whole heart was

poured out—to Daisy, addressed under cover to Dr. Branksome; but no reply had come, and I was meditating some further step for the purpose of gaining tidings of her.

One morning, however, a servant brought me word that a person had called to see me on particular business and was waiting in the hall of the hotel. I went down and found one of the crew of the *Golden Hawk* awaiting my appearance. He saluted me respectfully, and placed in my hand a note. It was unsigned, and I did not know the handwriting, but it was written on a sheet of note-paper stamped with the name of the yacht. It contained only a simple message. "If you wish to see Dr. B., come on board the yacht at once."

The man waited a moment after I had read the note, and then said,

"The captain's gig is on the beach, sir, if you mean to go on board."

"Who gave you this note?" I asked.

"The captain himself, sir," was the immediate reply. "And I was told that you would return with me."

"When did Dr. Branksome arrive?"

"I don't know, sir. I have not seen him. He must have come on board when I was below."

Of course I did not hesitate a moment. I hardly stopped to light a cigar before I started for the beach, walking with a brisker step and a gayer heart than I had known since I left Great Lorton—for was I not about to get news of Daisy?

It was a somewhat boisterous October day; but the wind was from the north-west, and the sea in the bay was therefore almost calm. In the offing I saw that the

passing steamers were making heavy weather of it; but on shore there was nothing threatening in the appearance of the skies. Two men were waiting in the gig, and with the help of one of the local boatmen we had soon pushed off and were making our way to the yacht.

How well I remembered my former visit to her when I was in the company of Daisy! I looked eagerly as we neared the stately vessel for the friendly face of Branksome; but I looked in vain. He was evidently below, probably sheltering himself from the keen autumn air.

As I stepped on board, one of the stewards came up to me, and touching his hat said, "This way, sir, if you please."

I followed him down the gangway, and passing through the dining-saloon I found myself in a passage leading, as I remembered, to the chief saloon and to the lovely little boudoir which had been prepared for Daisy's special use. To my surprise it was to the latter apartment that I was conducted. It was rather dark within, but some one was awaiting me, and I entered with outstretched hand.

"How kind of you—" I began, and stopped suddenly. It was not Branksome's commanding figure that I saw before me. It was the short, powerful form of Flinter.

I was more startled than I should have liked to admit; but I recovered myself as well as I could.

"I beg your pardon," I said, "I came on board to see Dr. Branksome, who has sent for me."

"Just so!" replied Flinter in a dry tone, beneath which I fancied that I detected a touch of irony.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me where I shall find him?"

He looked at me for a moment, and in the semi-gloom of the cabin, the windows of which were curtained, I detected a smile upon his hard bad face. There was something that irritated me in his manner. I had seen that, despite the evident confidence which Mauleverer evidently reposed in him, he was not treated either by the millionaire or by Branksome himself on a footing of social equality, and I knew enough of him to be aware that he had none of the conventional claims to be regarded as a gentleman. Annoyed at his silence and his insolent bearing, I addressed him in a different tone from that which I had used at first.

"Come, sir!" I said, "I do not wish to keep Dr. Branksome waiting, and I know he expects me. Have the goodness to let me see him at once."

"Oh, certainly! Come this way." He spoke still in the tone of veiled irony which irritated me so much, but he no longer stood like a statue. He placed his powerful hand lightly on my arm and led me along a passage, and through an open doorway which gave access to another short passage. There was an open door at the end of it, and almost before I was aware I had passed through it and was standing in the middle of the strange apartment which the Duke of Cairngorm had caused to be prepared as a punishment-cell when the yacht was built.

My first impression was that Flinter was playing some rough jest at my expense.

"What do you mean by bringing me to this place?" I asked. "Dr. Branksome is not here."

Flinter stood in the narrow doorway, which his powerful figure completely filled.

"You are quite right, young man," he said. "The doctor is not here; but you'll find very comfortable quarters here until he comes—quite as good as you deserve."

"You insolent fool," I cried hotly, "let me pass!"

I was strong, and had plenty of mere physical pluck. I did not hesitate a moment as I advanced to push him on one side. But before I could lay a finger on the ruffian I found myself seized by the collar in a grip which was like that of a giant. It was all in vain that I struggled and struck out. I was flung with violence upon the floor of the cabin, and before I could regain my feet I heard the door close with a sharp snap, and I knew that I was alone in the gloomy apartment.

Almost instantaneously, however, a small trap in the door, like that which is used for the purpose of handing food to prisoners in their cells, and which for aught I knew to the contrary was intended to serve the same purpose here, was opened, and I saw Flinter's hateful eyes peering at me, whilst a hoarse chuckle of malicious pleasure broke from his throat.

"Well," he said, after he had surveyed me for a moment, "I hope you will like your quarters. Your hot blood will have time to cool there. Make yourself comfortable, young man, and don't feel afraid of being starved. You'll find plenty of good victuals on the table in the corner."

"If this is an impudent joke," I cried, "it had better be ended at once unless you wish me to report your conduct to your master."

"Oh yes, it is a joke," he retorted with a brutal laugh, "and it seems to me it is a very good one too."

"Open the door instantly, or you shall pay dearly for your shameful misbehavior."

"Pay! yes, I'll pay you in good time," he replied; and then suddenly the little trap-door closed with a click, and he was gone. I heard his retreating footsteps in the passage, and shouted to him at the top of my voice. But even as I did so I heard a heavy iron door noisily shut, and then all was silence.

I shook the door of my prison, I shouted, I stamped upon the floor; I made noise enough, as I thought, to be heard not only throughout the vessel but for a great distance on the sea. But I might as well have been crying to the winds. Either by some cunning contrivance all sounds proceeding from the cell were stifled forthwith, or those on board the *Golden Hawk* were taught to pay no heed to them.

Exhausted even more by rage and indignation than by any physical exertions, I sat down at last upon the cushioned bench which was evidently meant to serve the double purpose of a bed and a seat, and tried to collect my bewildered sense and take a calm view of my position. What was the meaning of the stratagem of which I had been made the victim? Could it be possible that it was really intended to make a prisoner of me in this violent fashion? and if so, with what object was such a crime committed?

These were the questions which I rapidly revolved in my mind. Incredible as it seemed, I was nevertheless forced to admit that I must answer the first in the affirmative. In broad daylight, and in an English

watering-place, I had been trapped and imprisoned, with as little regard for my personal rights, or for the claims of the law, as could have been shown by the worst desperadoes in the wildest parts of the earth. And what was worse, it was at once apparent to me that I was utterly helpless. The fatal folly of the Duke of Cairngorm had provided a prison for me from which I could hardly hope to escape unless with the connivance of my jailers. And then I thought with despair of the fact that my abduction had been managed in such a fashion that no one on shore could have any reason to suspect foul play. I had left the hotel openly, and as I now remembered bitterly, with so cheerful an air that there could certainly have been nothing in my appearance to arouse the suspicions of the people there. I would be missed of course, and probably my disappearance might be a brief wonder for the people of the house; but who could attribute it to anything more than some sudden freak? There was no one in Scarborough who took any interest in me, or who would feel called upon to make any inquiry into my whereabouts. I remembered how on that very morning I had looked out from my bedroom window and seen the Golden Hawk at anchor at the spot where she had lain ever since her arrival. Many a man would look out to-morrow morning and see the beautiful ship, as I had done, without dreaming for a moment that it was associated with such an outrage as that of which I was the victim.

But what could be the purpose of such a crime as this? Only one conclusion was possible. The letters both of Daisy and Dr. Branksome had hinted at some

extraordinary change in the character of Mauleverer—something approaching, in fact, to a fit of madness. I was conscious of having offended no man but the millionaire. Nobody else had any interest in keeping me at a distance from Daisy. And it was on his yacht that I was now a captive, and in the hands of a ruffian against whom not merely my own instincts, and the strange dream I had had in the haunted chamber, but my darling's words, had warned me, as a man with whom any dealings must be dangerous. I could not resist the conclusion that Mauleverer, carried away by some fit of insane passion, possibly on making the discovery that letters had passed between me and his niece, had caused me to be seized in this violent fashion by the creature who was his most trusted agent.

The more I thought over the subject the more clearly convinced I became that this was the real interpretation of Flinter's conduct, and as I reflected upon it I felt that my only hope lay in the early appearance of Branksome. I was convinced now that he was not on board the yacht, and that his name had been merely used for the purpose of luring me into the cunning trap. But he had promised to see me soon. He had said he was coming to Scarborough. It was certain that business would bring him on board the *Golden Hawk*, and then I might hope that he would hear of the outrage which had been committed upon me and would come to my rescue.

It is needless to speak of the unutterable tedium of the first hours which I spent in my gloomy prison. When I had to some extent recovered my equanimity I made a careful inspection of the place, hoping that I

might perhaps find, if not some way of escape, at all events the means of communicating with those on board the yacht.

The cabin was about nine feet square, and almost the first thing I discovered was that the walls were lined with sheet-iron. It was lighted by means of a funnel some four feet in length, which ran upwards at a sharp angle, and at the end of which was a thick circular plate of glass. It was clear therefore that my cell-wall was at some distance from the side of the ship. This little window which shed the dimmest of light into the cabin was fixed; but the air in the place was by no means bad, and it was clear, therefore, that it was ventilated in some fashion which I could not discover.

For a moment my heart beat more quickly when I found that there was a second door to the apartment, in addition to that by which I had entered it. I opened this door and found that it led into a small bath-room, provided, I presumed, for the use of the Duke's sons when his grace found it necessary to subject them to the discipline of the punishment-cell. This little bath-room, which was plainly but completely fitted, lay between my prison and the side of the vessel, and it was dimly lighted from the passage by means of which entrance to the place was obtained. When I made this discovery I remembered having noticed on my first visit to the yacht that the walls of this passage also were lined with iron. It was clear to me at once that there was no escape in that direction.

Everything appeared to be scrupulously clean; nor could it be said that—allowing for deficiency of light—my quarters would have been at all bad if I had occu-

pied them voluntarily. I had seen many an officer's cabin in our big ironclads which was not to be compared to this either in spaciousness or in the convenience of its furnishing. For when my eyes had become accustomed to the prevailing twilight gloom, I had ascertained that very fair provision had been made for the comfort of the unlucky wight who was destined to occupy the place. The couch which occupied one side of the room was capacious enough to form a commodious bed, and though the cushion was no doubt hard, it was not harder than many on which I had slept voluntarily in the past. A small chest of drawers, above which hung a glass in which, when I looked into it, I saw nothing but a ghastly blur of white,—the indistinguishable reflection of my face,—stood near the door; while at the opposite end was a folding-stool and the table to which Flinter had drawn my attention.

He had not deceived me in one respect. There was, as he had said, an abundant supply of "good victuals" on this table. It was covered with a white table-cloth, and I could see a loaf of bread, a dish on which were neatly arranged a number of slices of cold beef, a bottle of claret, another of water, together with salt and other ordinary accessories of the table. It was at least evident that my captors had no thought of starving me. Nay, I made a discovery that positively caused me for a moment to think less bitterly even of the ruffian Flinter. On a small shelf above the table there was a well-filled box of cigars—Larranagas of the finest brand.

Clearly then, though I was a prisoner, there was no intention of subjecting me to any ill-treatment beyond that which was needful to keep me in close confine-

ment. This conviction finally satisfied me that I had been correct in my conclusion as to the real reason of my abduction. I was the captive of the millionaire; but I was also his guest, and he had not forgotten some at least of the laws of hospitality in his treatment of me.

I sat down upon my bench after this long and careful survey of my prison, and again tried to think steadily, calmly, and clearly of my situation. My investigation had satisfied me that there was no means of escape from within, and little if any chance of being able to communicate with those persons on the yacht—if such there were—who were not privy to my abduction. I was struck by the almost entire absence of sounds from without, and was more than ever convinced that some special means had been taken for the purpose of procuring the isolation of the cell. No sound of trampling feet on deck, no cries from the sailors, no whistle of wind in the rigging reached my ears. I might have been at the bottom of a coal-mine so far as any knowledge either by sight or sound of what was passing in the outer world was concerned.

How long I had remained buried in gloomy thought, wondering how and when this strange adventure was to end, and what good purpose Mauleverer really hoped to serve by treating me in this lawless fashion, I cannot say. Suddenly, however, I heard a sound which made me start to my feet, trembling from head to foot with a new excitement. I was fond of the sea, and had made many a voyage in my father's company. I did not need, therefore, to be told what was the meaning of the noise which now penetrated even the dreary silence of my cell.

It was that deep, muffled throb which marks the first revolution of the engine on board a steamer.

I listened with all my senses on the alert, and very quickly I found that my ears had not deceived me. Slowly at first, and then with increasing speed, the dull throbbing of the engines was continued, and almost simultaneously I heard the rattle of the capstan, and knew that the anchor was being weighed. I hardly dared to allow my own mind to grasp the real significance of the sounds. I stood there, almost breathless, my ear fixed to the door of my cell, during minutes which seemed hours. But only too soon there was the fullest confirmation of my fears. To the throb of the engine was now added the harsher grinding of the shaft of the screw, whilst very soon other evidences convinced me that we were putting out to sea.

Once more I raised my voice in loud cries. It had been terrible before, when I knew exactly where I was, and when I could at least feel that we were lying at anchor in an English bay. But now when I found that we were steaming away across the waves, in a direction which I was absolutely unable to determine, bound, it might be, for some port where civilized laws had no effect, and when I remembered too that I was absolutely in the power of a ruffian whom I believed to be capable of any crime, fresh terrors seized upon my imagination. I exhausted myself utterly in vain attempts to attract the attention of the crew.

Soon, indeed, I realized the fact that if I had not been able to make them hear before, there was not the faintest chance of my doing so now. The yacht had passed beyond the shelter of the Castle Cliff and was

breasting the waves, which ever and anon broke upon its quivering sides with a roar that must have drowned all other sounds. The motion of the vessel increased so much that if I had not been an exceptionally good sailor I should soon have been placed *hors de combat*; and my past experience of the sea enabled me even in my gloomy prison-house to perceive that we were laboring through a heavy gale from the nor'-west.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE VOYAGE.

I LOOKED at my watch. To my surprise I found that it was only one o'clock in the afternoon. I had heard the church clocks striking ten when I first stood on the deck of the yacht. My imprisonment, which seemed to have lasted for an age, had really so far continued for rather less than three hours. The panic—for I can call it nothing else, though it is with shame that I make the confession—into which I had been thrown when I first knew that we were putting out to sea subsided with a suddenness that surprised even myself. Perhaps it was the calm of despair that took possession of my breast. At all events I succeeded for the moment in driving all agitating ideas out of my mind. I assumed the airs of a philosopher. I could not help myself, it was certain; and why, therefore, should I continue to expend my strength in fruitless attempts to baffle my fate? For the present, at least, no bodily harm was intended to

me. It would be wiser, therefore, to accept the situation and await events.

Full of this new composure, I began to take notice of the fact that I was hungry, and that food was at my elbow. I turned to the table and observed there for the first time that which I ought to have seen before. Guards had been put upon the table before the food was to have been placed on it, so that even the bottles were kept in their places despite the heavy rolling of the vessel.

I satisfied my hunger, and then—why, then I remembered the cigar-box. I remembered, too, that I had in my pocket a box of wax-matches. In another minute I was lying on the couch, in as easy a position as it was possible to maintain under the motion of the vessel, enjoying one of the very best cigars I had ever smoked.

I shall not inflict upon my readers all the phases of the long, deep reverie in which I indulged whilst one cigar after another vanished in smoke. At times I awoke as from a dream to a sense of the extraordinary and alarming position in which I found myself, and then I rose and rushing to the door shook it violently to see whether by any accident it might have been opened as I lay in silence on my couch. But, for the most part, I maintained the composure which fell upon me after I knew that we were fairly out at sea, and allowed my fancy to run riot in those imaginary meetings with my darling which form the solace of all absent lovers.

By and by the gloom of my room grew deeper and I knew that night was stealing on. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It was five o'clock. These four hours had passed more quickly, and despite the gale which the ship was encountering, far more comfortably

than the three hours that had elapsed between my capture and the commencement of our voyage. I was thinking somewhat wofully of the long hours of darkness which now lay before me, when noiselessly and instantaneously a flood of silvery light filled the cabin. Startled by its sudden appearance, I looked up, only to discover that an electric light was shining above my head in its pear-shaped glass. It was only when this happened and when I felt all the comfort of being at last able to survey my abode at ease—for the artificial light was far brighter than the natural one had been—that I realized the striking apprehension with which I had regarded the prospect of a night spent in absolute darkness in such a place.

“If I only had a book now,” I said to myself, “and—why yes, I should really enjoy a cup of tea. Surely the millionaire would not begrudge me that if he knew how much I should relish it!”

Hardly had the words passed my lips than I heard the click of a key, and then I saw that the little trap in the door had been opened and that Flintner was regarding me with a sardonic smile upon his ugly face. All authorities on the subject are agreed as to the surprising effect which solitary confinement has in taming a man's spirits. I found now that the authorities were right. Instead of making a wild dash at the spot where the ill-omened countenance of my captor was visible, I sat still and merely indulged myself with a silent stare of disdain in return for his grin of derision.

He sniffed audibly, inhaling the fumes of tobacco with which my little room was filled.

“Enjoying yourself pretty well, it seems to me. You

do right. No good in kicking when you can only hurt yourself by it. Be civil and quiet and you won't be kept so long perhaps as you suppose where you are now. I came to see if you would like some dinner."

"Dinner!" I said. "I thought the meat you left for me was intended for my dinner; and I really found it very good." Seeing that I had given up for the present the thought of trying violence, I felt it better to keep up in his presence the air of philosophic coolness which I had adopted for my own comfort.

"No : lunch," he replied sententiously. "You'll have good victuals here if you only behave yourself. If you give me your promise to keep quiet, I'll bring you your dinner as soon as it is ready."

I hesitated for a moment, troubled by the thought of keeping any terms with such a ruffian, but then I somewhat sullenly gave him the promise he asked. He immediately disappeared.

In about half an hour he returned, and throwing open the door entered with a tray which he balanced as the ship rolled as cleverly as a steward on board a Cunard liner could have done. In a surprisingly short space of time he had cleared away the remains of my morning meal, and had laid upon the table a dinner such as few captives, I venture to say, are indulged with.

"Ship's rolling too much for me to bring you any soup; but there's fish and cutlets and partridge, cheese and celery, and a pint of champagne. It's as good a dinner, I bet, as you would have got in Scarborough."

"Very good indeed, I am sure. It is of no use, I suppose, asking you, Mr. Flint, why I am here;" he

shook his head; "but at least you might tell me where I am going."

"No use asking questions," he responded shortly. "Because why: I never answer 'em. So that's plain. But if you keep quiet, as I've told you already, you shall be as well served with food and drink as if you were the old man himself. Now is there anything more you want?"

"I should like a book to read."

"A book! Oh yes; if that is all, you shall soon have a book. Bless me, I'll bring you an armful the next time I come, if only it will keep you quiet."

He left me to partake of my dinner in solitude. I did justice to it, and despite my unpleasant situation and my dislike, not to say dread, of the ruffian who was responsible for my imprisonment, I felt almost cheerful when he presently returned, carrying nearly a dozen volumes in his arms, in addition to some blankets for my use during the night.

"There's books for you!" he said, tumbling them in a pile on the chest of drawers. "Make what you can of them: they're nothing in my line."

And right eagerly did I avail myself of his invitation to do so, when I was once more left alone. It was true that I was disappointed with Mr. Flinter's choice in literary matters. One of his volumes was a list of the Royal Yacht Squadron, two more were works relating to the art of navigation, a fourth was nothing more than a series of tables of logarithms, a fifth was an odd volume of that venerable work, Russell's History of Modern Europe; then there was a well-thumbed copy of "Buchan's Domestic Medicine," a Dictionary, a copy of Thomas Moore's poems, and, last of all in the pile, Guy and Ferrier's "Forensic Medicine."

It was this book which, though it was at the bottom of the heap, attracted me first. It did so partly because it was the only work which had a modern appearance in the collection, and partly because my own medical studies had given me an interest in it. The rest of the books were old and battered. I could not imagine how they had been introduced into such a palace as the Golden Hawk. The copy of "Forensic Medicine" was in good preservation, and was evidently the latest edition of that standard work.

I took it into my hands and turned to the title-page. It was the edition, I saw, of 1875. The binding was quite new, and the pages were clean. The book apparently had hardly been opened. I was holding it lightly in my hand whilst I speculated as to how such a volume chanced to have come here, when I found that it had opened, almost, as it seemed to me, of its own accord, at a particular page. I knew in a moment what had happened. When the volume was first bought it had evidently been opened at this page, and the reader, whoever he might be, wishing to keep it open there, had bent the stiff new back in such a way as to make something like a spring of it—a spring which, when the volume was held in a certain way, caused it always to open at one particular place. Any of my readers who cares to destroy the outward appearance of a new book may by a simple experiment satisfy himself of the possibility of doing this.

What was the subject which the person, who had apparently looked at no other part of the volume, had been studying?

I glanced carelessly down at the printed page, and the

first word I saw was "Strychnia." Strychnia, poison ! Wild thoughts coursed instantaneously through my brain. I saw that the chapter which some one had been studying with the closest care—for the pages were well thumbed—was that in which the whole subject of poisoning by means of strychnia, the symptoms, the dose, the fatal period, and the *post-mortem* appearances, are treated with masterly precision.

What did it mean ? Let my reader place himself in my position, a prisoner absolutely at the mercy of a man whom I honestly believed to be capable of any crime, if he wishes to understand the dark and terrible fancies which forthwith took possession of my brain. Who could have bought this book merely in order to study the subject of poisoning by strychnia with an innocent intention ? That was the first question I asked myself. Once more I remembered the awful words of Gregson. Was it possible that murder was really about to be done at Great Lorton Hall ? Nay, as the man whom I knew to be the only one likely to commit such a crime was on board the Golden Hawk at this moment, might it not be the case that the crime had already been committed, and that whilst he was flying from justice he had carried me with him to prevent my being of any service to Daisy or her uncle ? And if there had been murder, who was the victim ? Was it the millionaire ? Or was it—could it be—my darling ?

I sat dazed and helpless for a time under the horror of this new train of thought. But I was now face to face with a problem which demanded the full use of all my faculties. If I were to deal with it to any useful purpose, I must treat it with all the coolness and delib-

eration of which I was capable. Gently closing the book, I flung my cigar aside, and going to the bath-room bathed my head in the cool refreshing water of which there was apparently an unlimited supply. Then I came back to my seat and carefully tried an experiment which had occurred to me.

Laying the closed book on its back on the palm of my hand, I allowed it again to fall open at its own will. Once more it opened at page 586, and again I read that first sentence of the page, which describes how "The patient complains of a choking sensation, and of thirst and dryness of the throat; but the effort to drink often occasions rigid spasms of the muscles of the jaw. Sometimes there is foaming at the mouth, and the froth may be tinged with blood," etc., etc.

I repeated the experiment in another manner; the result was the same. I tried it again and again, and always the volume opened at the same page. Yes, it was quite clear to me now that the owner of this book had bought it for the simple purpose of studying the subject of poisoning by means of strychnia. All the pages of the volume, it is true, were cut open, but it was only at this part of it that there were any of those unmistakable signs which showed that it had been read and studied with care again and again.

I read the whole chapter through with attention, and it says something I think for my command over my own nerves that I did not forthwith fancy that I was myself suffering from that "feeling of suffocation" which is described as the earliest symptom after the poison has been swallowed. For I could not drive out of my mind the possibility that this accidental discovery

might have the deepest personal interest for myself. If I had fallen into the hands of a murderer, what assurance had I that he might not try his frightful arts upon me? The thought was one that it was difficult to face with composure. I began to realize what is the lot of the captive who lies in peril of his life, and who is powerless to defend himself against the unknown doom which may be hanging over him.

Terrible was the long night through which I now passed. The gale had evidently risen to a great height; and the motion of the vessel was such as to be distressing even to the most experienced of sailors. In place of the dead silence of the morning my prison-cell was now filled with that indescribable tumult of sound that marks the progress of a battle between a good vessel and a raging sea. I could hear the shriek of the wind and the roar of the waves, whilst, even above these sounds rose that constant groaning and creaking of the straining timbers which showed how hardly the ship was beset by the storm. I could feel too the fury of the blows which each successive wave delivered against the side of the yacht. A storm at sea is an awful thing to the landsman at the best of times. Let my reader try if he can conceive what this storm was to me—held like a rat in a trap in the middle of the laboring vessel.

Yet despite my fears and the tumult all around me I slept, and my sleep was strangely free from those hideous dreams of which I had been apprehensive. When I awoke at last the bright light of the electric lamp had disappeared, and some faint rays from the outer sky were entering my cabin through the funnel

which served the purpose of a window. I looked at my watch and discovered that it was nine o'clock. To my great joy, too, I found that the sea had fallen, and that the yacht was making comparatively steady progress through the waters.

It is no part of my purpose to inflict the whole story of my imprisonment upon the reader. Nothing indeed could be more monotonous—or more terrible in its monotony—than the manner in which my days were passed. Thrice during this second day I was visited by Flinter bringing food. I hardly spoke to him, and he made no attempt to open a conversation with me. I was still absorbed in an attempt to put together the various pieces of that strange puzzle, the first bit of which that had been put into my hands was my meeting with Daisy and Gregson at the York railway-station, and the last the discovery of the passage on Strychnia in the work on forensic medicine. That there was some strange unity of significance in all that had happened to me since I first saw my darling was a conviction that was slowly forcing itself upon my mind. Never before in my peaceful life had I been even remotely associated with anything in the nature of a mystery; but now for some weeks I had been literally dwelling in the midst of mysteries. Hour after hour passed whilst I tried to hit upon some key which should make the whole strange and jumbled story plain. But I labored in vain. There was only one point of which in my heart of hearts I was as certain as of my own existence. That was that, come what might, nothing could ever be revealed which would cast a shadow of shame upon the name of the girl whom I loved.

Day after day went by in the same painful and hopeless round, and I began to despair of ever again being released from my hateful prison-house. It was more than a week since we had left Scarborough. Where we now were I could not form the faintest conception. I knew that we had once stopped for an hour or more, and I guessed from the perfect stillness of the vessel that we had entered some harbor. I was conscious too of the fact that it was now much colder than it had been when we left England, and I had been thankful for the additional rugs with which my jailer had supplied me. But Flinter evaded all my attempts to elicit from him any information as to our whereabouts. Nor would he give me the faintest hint of when I might hope to be released from my captivity.

Ten days of an imprisonment, so close as mine was, began to tell not merely upon my spirits but upon my physical health. My appetite failed utterly, and I hardly touched the delicacies with which Flinter, to do him justice, kept my table abundantly supplied. I found myself daily growing weaker, and the victim of an apathy which was altogether alien to my nature. In plain English, I was cowed and broken by the treatment to which I had been subjected. I no longer even spoke to Flinter on his periodical visits to my cell.

It was when I was in the midst of one of my worst fits of dejection that the event which I had so ardently longed for took place. I was aroused one morning, shortly before noon, by the noisy opening of the great iron door which barred the entrance to the passage leading to my place of confinement, and for the first time since I had entered the accursed hole I heard the sound

of voices outside. They were speaking in quick, excited, and even angry tones.

Before I had time to realize what was coming, the door of my room was thrown open, and, to my intense amazement, I saw Dr. Branksome standing before me.

"My God!" he cried, in an agitated voice, whilst he advanced and took my hand, "he has not been lying, as I hoped might be the case! And you have been here—a prisoner—ever since we sailed! This is monstrous! Oh, if I had only known! But come!—come at once, my poor fellow, and let me give you back your liberty!"

"Ah, doctor," I cried, in a tone the feebleness of which startled even myself, "how I have longed for you! I knew that you would save me if you could."

"My dear fellow, don't exhaust yourself," he said, still visibly agitated. He placed his arm round my waist, and drawing me gently out of that black prison in which I had endured so much, led me into the main saloon of the yacht. The flood of light dazzled my eyes; the sound of human voices after that long spell of silence made all my nerves quiver. There was a mist before my sight, a buzzing in my ears, and a sensation of choking in my throat.

But Branksome was as skilful as he was gentle and sympathetic.

"Lie down here;" and as he spoke he laid me on one of the soft couches of the saloon. "Good God! how you have suffered! Here, take this," and he almost forced a restorative of some sort down my throat. There was some one standing beside him whom I now recognized as Fosdyke. He had a look of deep pity on his face—nay, it was almost one of horror and incredulity.

I saw the same expression on the face of the captain of the yacht, and of a steward, who were also in the saloon. They seemed quite overcome at the contemplation of the crime of which I had been the victim. I cast my eyes round the beautiful apartment, and to my relief saw that the hateful Flinter was not among those present.

Very quickly I recovered my strength and composure so far as to be able to give Branksome and the solicitor an account of all that had happened to me since I received the note inviting me to go on board the yacht.

"That note—have you got it?" said Branksome, eagerly. He was manifestly resolved to know the whole truth regarding my abduction. I handed it to him.

"Ah, it is Flinter's handwriting. But, captain, how came it that you never mentioned until this morning that Mr. Fenton had been on board the yacht on the morning that he sailed?" He turned with a haughty look upon the captain, a plain matter-of-fact seaman with a somewhat bloated face. More than ever was I impressed by the sense of power which seemed to distinguish Branksome in all that he said and did.

"Why, sir," returned the seaman in manifest embarrassment, "I was told that the gentleman had left the ship in one of the shore-boats; besides—well, to tell the whole truth upon my honor, sir, Mr. Flinter said I was not to mention anything about it to you. He said as how this gentleman was no longer friends with the master, and that you would be displeased if you knew he had been aboard."

"Pshaw!" cried Branksome, impatiently. "I could almost believe that the whole of you were in a conspiracy

against Mr. Fenton, and against me also. The chief steward knew that Flinter was supplying food to Mr. Fenton, and never said a word to me, simply because he had allowed himself to believe that the poor fellow was ill, and that for some reason of his own he did not wish his presence on board the ship to be known. Why, great heavens, he might have been kept a prisoner forever, so far as any of the ship's officers were concerned. I never heard of such stupidity. If I had not accidentally mentioned Mr. Fenton's name to you, captain, half an hour ago, and if you had not in consequence asked if I was speaking of the gentleman who came aboard on the day we sailed, God knows how long this outrage might have continued."

Dr. Branksome spoke with warmth and indignation. The firm mouth was angrily compressed, and his eyes gave emphasis to all he said. I felt that I had found a protector and a champion. At a sign from him the captain and steward left the saloon, and I found myself alone with the doctor and Fosdyke.

"I have hardly recovered from the shock caused by the discovery of your condition," said the former. "Indeed I had no thought when I heard of your being in confinement save instantly to release you. I have not, therefore, had time as yet to get the whole truth out of Flinter as to his extraordinary and abominable behavior. Of course I shall do so, and you may depend upon my calling him sternly to account for an outrage which has brought him within the reach of the criminal law. That is so, I think, Mr. Fosdyke."

"Certainly!" replied the lawyer. "I should say that there never was a clearer case of abduction in this world.

Mr. Fenton, if he chooses to prosecute, may undoubtedly send Mr. Flinter to jail for a couple of years at least."

"May I ask," continued Branksome, "whether you are able to account to yourself in any way for this unheard-of procedure?"

He looked earnestly at me, and evidently awaited my reply with interest.

"I have formed a theory," I said, "but I do not know that I ought to name it in the presence of a third person."

"Oh, pray consider Fosdyke as being on the same footing as ourselves. So far as you are concerned, he knows everything."

There was no mistaking the emphasis with which the last word was spoken.

"Then I shall tell you exactly what it is that I have thought during my long and weary confinement. I believe that Mr. Mauleverer is deeply offended because I have ventured to pay my addresses to his niece, and anxious to get me, for a time at least, out of her way, has arranged this outrage with Flinter."

Branksome looked puzzled for a moment. It was evident that the idea was one that had not occurred to him before. He shook his head slowly.

"I cannot believe that the affair has been brought about in the way you describe. My poor friend Mauleverer is, I know, in a very curious state of mind at present, and he might do desperate things in one of those fits of desperate passion which have visited him recently, and which, I think, are connected with some obscure disease of the brain. But I should be slow to suppose

that he could ever stoop to that which is neither more nor less than actual crime. You have never yourself seen any reason to suppose that he would be guilty of such conduct?"

"I? Certainly not. In all my personal relations with Mr. Mauleverer, up to the moment when he wrote the note in which he dismissed me from his house, I have had every reason to feel that he was one of the kindest of men. But you know that both you and—and—Daisy have thought him greatly changed of late."

"True, true! and it is possible that, after all, he may have forgotten himself in the way you supposed; though I still think you are mistaken."

"As for Flinter," I continued, "mark my words, doctor! that man is a villain who is capable of anything. I should not care to trust my life in his hands, and if you are wise you will cease all connection with him as soon as possible."

"I don't wonder at your expression," replied Branksome, "but at the same time I can hardly think so badly of Flinter as you naturally do. However, I shall examine him at once, and make him reveal the whole truth, whatever it may be."

He was going to leave the saloon for the purpose of seeing the man from whom I had suffered so much, when I stopped him.

"Forgive me!" I said; "but I am quite in the dark as to where we are. The yacht has been at sea now for ten days, but for all I know to the contrary we may still be within a mile of Scarborough."

"No; we have not been standing still," he replied, with a smile. "We are at this moment nearing the

town of Bodo, on the coast of Norway. You have been carried away up into the arctic regions during your painful sojourn in the Duke's punishment-cell."

He hurriedly left the saloon, where Fosdyke remained with me. The lawyer explained that the trip to Bodo was a business one, connected with one of the numerous European investments of Mauleverer. At the same time he strongly advised me to take legal proceedings against Flinter. "There is not a jury in England but would give you swinging damages," he declared; and I quite agreed with him that the damages were due to me.

But even as we were talking of this Branksome returned. He was pale, and his face wore an expression of the utmost gravity.

"My friend," he said, "I grieve to have to say that you were right in your suspicions. Benjamin Flinter has proved to me by documentary evidence that in treating you in this infamous fashion he was nothing more than the agent, the tool, of our revered friend Mauleverer. Alas! it is incomprehensible that a man whose whole life was once so full of goodness should have resorted to lawlessness like this. There is only one explanation of it."

He tapped his forehead significantly as he uttered the last words.

CHAPTER X.

TERRIBLE NEWS.

ALTHOUGH I had all along believed this to be the true account of the outrage of which I had been the victim, it was not altogether pleasant to have my suspicion confirmed. My thoughts flew instantaneously to Daisy, shut up in the hall with a man who was either a desperate criminal or insane.

"Doctor," I said earnestly, "I have no wish to punish Mr. Mauleverer for the cruel trick he has played upon me. Even if there were no other reason for sparing him, the fact that he is Daisy's uncle would be sufficient. But I am terribly anxious about her. Has she no friend with her at Great Lorton? Is it not dangerous for her to remain alone with a man in Mauleverer's state of mind?"

"She is not alone," replied Branksome. "I thought I had told you that her old friend and companion, Mrs. Cawthorne, who accompanied her to England, had joined her at the hall. She was visiting in Derbyshire at the time when Mr. Mauleverer was at Scarborough."

I remembered to have heard Daisy speak of this lady in the warmest terms of affection, and I felt thankful that there was at least one person near her of her own sex, in whom she could confide.

"It is a sad business, I fear," pursued Branksome. "I have not told you yet of all that happened after you

left us so suddenly. Tell me, my friend: did Mr. Mauleverer show any symptoms of anger or even suspicion whilst he was with you in the smoking-room that night when you stopped at the hall?"

"Certainly not. He was just as friendly and as courteous in his manner as usual."

"That is bad, I fear—very bad. Will you believe that he had already discovered at that time what had taken place in the garden between you and Daisy—"

"How could he discover that?" I cried.

"Don't you understand? Did you not see Flinter leave the garden at the same time that we did? No," he said, raising his hand to check my impetuous cry of anger, "it would not be fair to blame Flinter for what he did then. Remember he is devoted body and soul to the service of his master. But what I feel is that Mauleverer's concealment of his anger whilst he sat with you in the smoking-room is very bad, because it looks so much like the cunning of insanity. And that he was mad—really mad—when you left the hall, I am prepared upon my oath to aver. He would never otherwise have treated Daisy as he did."

I shuddered. "Do you mean to say that there has been positive ill-usage?"

"Aye, more than enough of it. Of course, you understand that the poor child is neither starved nor beaten. But there are moral weapons which are still more cruel and terrible than these."

"Oh, how could you leave her to his mercy?" I cried in an agony of pain. "I cannot understand how any one could have deserted her in such circumstances. Let us go back to her at once."

"My good fellow, keep calm," replied the doctor, on whose face sympathy rather than indignation at my fiery language was expressed. "Do you suppose that if I could have been of any service to the dear child I would have left her as I did? I found, however, that my presence for various reasons actually aggravated her sufferings; so I did what I could. I summoned Mrs. Cawthorne to her, and in obedience to Mauleverer's orders I came up here to attend to his affairs."

"But you say we are in the arctic regions: what can be the affairs of Mr. Mauleverer in this part of the world?"

"Have you not heard of the discovery of gold in Norway? Our friend has a very large interest in what may turn out to be one of the most important properties of its kind in the world."

"Where are we at this moment?" I asked.

"Within half an hour of Bodo, the place where I am to see the agent of the mines."

"You will put me ashore there," I said sternly, for I was cut to the heart by the thought of Daisy's situation. "I must return to England instantly."

"I understand your wish; but pray, Mr. Fenton, do not act rashly. You will get back to England, I imagine, quite as soon by sticking to the yacht as by adopting any other mode of making the journey."

"Thanks," I said ungraciously; "but you can hardly be surprised that I should have no desire to remain the guest of Mr. Mauleverer for a single hour after I have the power of leaving his too hospitable ship."

He looked at me gravely. "Well," he remarked presently, "I shall not attempt to prevent the carrying

out of what I feel is a natural impulse. But now, if you will excuse me, I would suggest that you change your attire. I have ascertained that Flinter did not do things by halves. After you had been brought aboard the yacht, he sent ashore for your baggage, and I have just had it placed in one of the state-rooms.

"Upon my word," I said, "I shall remember my obligations to Mr. Flinter as long as I live, and some day I hope I shall be able to repay them."

Branksome made no reply. I was conscious of the fact that, although very indignant at the treatment to which I had been subjected, he was not inclined to take any active part in my quarrel with Flinter. That being the case, I was resolved not to reveal to him those darker suspicions which I entertained against the villain. If I did so, it was just possible that the doctor might let drop some incautious word which would put Flinter on his guard. That the latter meditated murder—either my murder, or Daisy's, or perchance Mauleverer's—and that he had thought of using poison for the purpose, I was almost certain. I had not spent ten long days in studying that sinister chapter in the medical work without having formed a theory of my own regarding it.

It was certainly true that I needed before everything else a change of attire. Although I had been able to indulge in unlimited ablutions in my cell, I had been compelled to go without any change of clothes for the whole period. Enraged as I was at the daring insolence of Flinter, I could hardly find it in my heart to rebuke this last instance of it, when I found myself comfortably clad in clean linen, and in a more suitable attire than that which I had recently been wearing.

I heard the engines stop, and the anchor-chains go rattling through the hawse-hole as I was putting the finishing touches to my toilet; and immediately afterwards Branksome appeared at the door of the sumptuous little cabin where I had found my property, and invited me to go on deck.

I was altogether unprepared for the scene that now presented itself. All around, as it appeared to me at the first glance, were great snow-clad mountains, glittering under the cold sunshine in a dazzling robe of white. We were in a landlocked harbor, within half a mile of a little town, the roofs of which were heavily laden with the silvery snow. It was only the water in the harbor, and the winding channel which seemed to lead to the outer sea, that afforded any relief to the glittering white which covered the whole landscape. It was in very truth an arctic scene which I beheld. No wind was blowing, and I was surprised to find that the temperature was by no means painfully cold. It was delightful once more to behold the outer world. Strange and barren as was that land, I longed for the moment when I should set foot upon it, and find myself free from the accursed vessel which had been my prison.

"I am sending ashore for our letters," said Branksome; "if you are really determined to leave the yacht at once you may go with the boat; but if you will allow me to advise you, I should certainly recommend you to stay on board till the letters have been received. Who knows what news they may give us of affairs at Great Lorton? Do not let your natural and justifiable anger carry you too far."

I yielded to the temptation, and agreed to remain

until the steward had returned from the poste-restante, and meanwhile I watched the strange and interesting scene before me with a curious eye. There was only one vessel in the little harbor, and all its rigging and spars seemed to be coated with ice. I could see men and women walking on the shore clad in unwieldy garments of fur; whilst close at hand thousands of eider-duck and other beautiful sea-fowl were swimming on the water, or nestling on the little black rocks which everywhere rose just above the surface of the sea.

“Luncheon is ready, and this keen air must have given you an appetite.” It was Branksome who spoke. I had hoped that I should not have to make another meal on board the yacht, but I felt that I could not refuse the doctor’s invitation without discourtesy, so I went below.

Certainly this meal was very different from those of which I had partaken lately. My companions at the table in the magnificent dining-saloon were Branksome and Fosdyke, and it was evident that they were resolved to do all they could to entertain me. It seemed as though they were anxious to make some amends for the shameful treatment I had already received on board the *Golden Hawk*. Fosdyke had an endless store of interesting anecdotes relating to criminal cases and the peculiarities of famous judges and counsel; whilst Branksome’s talk was what I had found it to be at Scarborough—penetrated with a wit and an intelligence such as very few men with whom I have ever been in contact have possessed.

But all conversation was stopped by the arrival of the letter-bag. Ridiculous as I knew that it must be to expect anything else, I confess that I was disappointed

when I found that there was nothing for me in the bag. I had secretly clung to the hope that Mauleverer might have betrayed my position to Daisy, in which case I felt assured that she would seek some means of communicating with me.

But though there was no letter for me, there was news from Great Lorton Hall. My instinct told me which of the letters that I saw Branksome turn over when he received the parcel from the steward was that which concerned me most deeply. Yes: I remembered the large square envelope Daisy had used when she wrote to me, and across the table I could even identify my darling's handwriting.

I could not take my eyes off Branksome's face as he read this letter—the first which he opened. It was not very long, but evidently it gave the doctor something to reflect upon. He read it a second time, and apparently pondered its contents carefully in his own mind. Suddenly he looked up and caught my eyes fixed intently upon him.

“Ah!” he said, with a smile, “I can understand how much you must wish to see what Daisy has written. Well, there are no secrets, so far as I can see, which need prevent you reading her letter;” and he tossed it lightly across to me.

It was written in a tone of affection and confidence, and it related some of the events which had happened at the hall since Branksome left. As the letter had been written only some three or four days after his departure, Daisy had not much to tell. But to my surprise and relief the news she told, so far as it concerned herself, was good. Her uncle, she said, had altered considerably

during the last two or three days. The passion and irritability which had marked his temper for some time had almost entirely disappeared. "He is becoming more like his dear old self, and he no longer treats me in the strange, cruel way in which he did at first. Oh, I do pray so earnestly that this happy change may continue. God grant that he may yet give me back his love, and that the cloud which has arisen between us may pass away. You know, dear doctor, what I mean when I say that—or rather you know what I do not mean. I shall never prove untrue to Mr. Fenton. I have promised him to be faithful, and though I may never marry at all, I shall never marry any but him."

My eyes sparkled with delight as I read the dear words. I could tell that both Branksome and Fosdyke were watching me, but I could not restrain the smile of joy that broke upon my lips.

"Where can he be?" she continued. "I am surprised that I should not have heard from him again; and sometimes I fear that he is ill, or that some misfortune of another kind has befallen him. When you return to England do befriend me, dear doctor, and try to ascertain where he is. I am forced to trust everything in your hands now. You will not desert us both?" There was a postscript to the letter which I confess I read with little interest compared with that with which I perused those passages that more immediately concerned myself. It ran as follows:

"I should have told you sooner that my uncle has not been very well of late. He has not had the doctor again, however. He is taking the medicine the doctor prescribed when he first saw him."

I hoped that Branksome would allow me to keep this letter, in which there was so much that had the deepest interest for me. But I was disappointed. When he saw that I had read it through, he held out his hand and received it from me.

"Now, Mr. Fenton," he said presently, "I am going to reason with you. Daisy's letter proves, I think, that Mr. Mauleverer is recovering his senses. You, who have seen him when in his ordinary state of mind, must know how gentle and amiable he is when free from mental excitement or disturbance. I want to plead with you for his forgiveness. Can you not see that when he is himself again, there will be no man living who will be more horrified at the thought of the outrage of which he has made you the victim than he will be?"

I assented to what Branksome said.

"Well, then, be generous to him. Remember his close connection with Daisy, and forgive him for his conduct, not merely by word of mouth, but in your inmost heart."

"I am quite ready to do that; indeed, I thought I had already done so."

"No, there is only one way in which you can show at this moment that you are not unforgiving. That is by remaining on the yacht. Yes, I see that you do not like the suggestion, but before you reject it consider one or two points. First, then, you will unquestionably show a magnanimous spirit which can hardly fail to impress Mr. Mauleverer in your favor when he recovers entirely from the excitement from which he has lately suffered; next, you will be complying with what I know under such circumstances would be Daisy's wish. Do

you not see in her letter how she recommends you to my protection? Well, I am ready to protect you, so far as I can do so, if you will follow my advice. Lastly, I believe that you will be able to get to England sooner by remaining with us than by any other way."

I wavered—and was lost. The truth is that I had no grievance against Branksome or Fosdyke. The former I had learned to like immensely and to trust entirely. The latter was one of the most amusing of companions. It was unpleasant no doubt to reflect upon the fact that Flinter was one of the company on board the vessel. But he had carefully kept out of my way since my release, and the ship was large enough to permit him to avoid me entirely if he wished to do so. I took the outstretched hand of Branksome and declared that I would finish my voyage as I had begun it, on board the *Golden Hawk*.

Three days we lay in the harbor at Bodo. This is not a story of Arctic travel, and therefore I shall not dwell upon the novel and interesting sights which I witnessed during our stay in the little port. Neither the novelty nor the interest of the thing, however, prevented my rejoicing openly when at last we started on our return journey. Thirty-six hours after quitting Bodo, we were at anchor in the port of Trondhjem, the ancient capital of Norway.

We were not to remain long here; but there was time, Dr. Branksome told me, to see the grand old Cathedral of St. Olaf, and the other sights of the place. Accompanied by Branksome and Fosdyke, I went through the wide streets of the quaint old city. The first place we visited was the post-office. There was a batch of letters

here for Fosdyke and one or two for Branksome. But there was no further news from Great Lorton.

"Let us go to the Hotel d'Angleterre," said Fosdyke, when we had done our sight-seeing at the Cathedral. "Suppose that we lunch there, and have a look at the newspapers."

"By all means," was the simultaneous reply of Branksome and myself; and before long we were seated in the cosily-furnished little salon of that well-known hotel. The friendly waiter brought the latest copy of the *Times*—six days old—to us, and Branksome after courteously offering it to me, began to peruse it with the hungry avidity of a man who has long been shut off from news of the outer world.

Fosdyke and I turned over the old illustrated papers which littered the table, and the well-thumbed register of visitors from all parts of the world, whilst ever and anon Branksome gave us the particulars of some incident of interest recorded in the journal. Suddenly a cry of horror startled me out of the placid frame of mind in which I had been awaiting my luncheon. It was Branksome who had uttered it. I looked up and saw him with a white panic-stricken face, holding the newspaper towards Fosdyke, his hand trembling with emotion. He was apparently incapable of speech.

"In heaven's name, what is the matter, Branksome? Are you ill?" cried the lawyer.

"O my God! my God!" he groaned, "read it! read it for yourself. Was there ever anything so dreadful in this world?"

Fosdyke did not seem to understand. I snatched the paper from Branksome's fingers, and after a moment's

delay I found the dreadful news which had moved him so deeply. This was the paragraph which I read :

“SUDDEN DEATH.—Our Lorton correspondent telegraphs to us to say that a profound sensation has been caused throughout the district by the news of the sudden death of Mr. George Mauleverer, the Australian millionaire, whose purchase of the Great Lorton estate was recently announced in our columns. It seems that Mr. Mauleverer was found dead in his bed yesterday morning, and the appearances indicate that he died during a fit of epilepsy to which it is rumored that he was subject. It is not thought likely that any inquest will be held. Mr. Mauleverer had only recently settled in England, his vast fortune having been accumulated in Australia, where he was well known as the wealthiest of the squatter aristocracy. He leaves behind him a niece who resided with him at Great Lorton Hall. Mr. Mauleverer during the short period of his residence on his Yorkshire estate had endeared himself to his tenantry by his liberality and kindliness. He had, however, been in ailing health almost ever since his arrival in England. Nothing is known as yet as to the disposition of his immense wealth.”

We sat utterly paralyzed by the sudden blow that had thus fallen upon us. Even I, although I had no great reason to feel drawn towards Mauleverer, was stunned by the greatness and unexpectedness of this calamity. Fosdyke was manifestly agitated and incredulous, unable to realize what it was that had happened. As for Branksome, his face was ghastly. All the brightness had faded out of it, and he sat with drawn features, pallid lips and eyes wide open, staring into space. After that

muffled cry of horror he had seemed to be literally incapable of speech.

"I don't believe it!" cried Fosdyke at last. "It is some d——d infernal lie of the newspapers. Eh, Branksome, don't you think so, too? For God's sake, man, don't let this upset you! I'll telegraph at once." He started up as though about to leave the room for that purpose.

Branksome feebly raised his hand to stay him.

"Don't go," he said, almost in a whisper; "for the love of heaven do not leave me yet."

There was something in his tone that made me feel that I was *de trop*. I had no right, I saw, to intrude upon such grief and horror as his. I got up quietly and stole out of the room. I went out into the street, where the snow was lying, and walked up and down bare-headed, regardless of the cold, trying to collect my thoughts, and realize what it was that had happened.

And my first clear idea was one of which at the time I felt ashamed—of which I am even more ashamed now after the lapse of years. I forgot all about Mauleverer himself, and only grasped the idea that at last the obstacle which stood between Daisy and myself had been removed. There was nothing now to prevent our marriage.

Nothing? Yes. I remembered myself. There was the dark shadow of Mauleverer's gold. Even now—from his grave I felt well assured that with his dead hand he would strive to keep us asunder.

The thought of Daisy had quickened my intellect, and I saw that there was at least one step which I ought to take. I went back to the little room where I had left

Branksome and Fosdyke. I found them engaged in conversation of the most earnest description, carried on in those low tones which, when the shadow of bereavement lies heavy on a man, he naturally adopts. They looked up when I entered as though they scarcely relished my intrusion. Fosdyke at all events could scarcely conceal his impatience. I made a hasty apology, and seizing my coat and hat left the room. Five minutes later I was in the telegraph office, writing a message to my darling, in which I expressed my sorrow at hearing the news of her bereavement, and my hope that within a few days we might meet again.

As I waited whilst the clerk checked the message, my thoughts were naturally busy with that solemn event which had in a moment robbed Mauleverer of all his wealth and reduced him to the common level of our poor mortality. He had been dead now just a week. Probably this was the day of his funeral. My imagination took wings across the storm-tossed Northern sea, and I saw in fancy the funeral procession starting from that gloomy old hall among the Yorkshire wolds, with one slight girlish figure, draped in black, following the coffin of the man at whose riches all the world had wondered. "O my darling," I cried in my heart, "why am I not with you to help you to bear your sorrow, and to drive away that sense of loneliness which is never felt so keenly as by the side of an open grave?"

And then like a flash of lightning there darted through my brain the remembrance of the words spoken to me by Gregson in the railway-carriage, and of all the sinister portents that had attended my visit to the hall. Up to that moment I had regarded the rich man's death as

any other person would have done who had read the paragraph in the *Times*. But now, in an instant, I saw it all. Fool that I was, not to have seen it sooner! Mauleverer had been murdered!

Murdered! but how and by whom? One man there was whom I suspected above all others. But he was here, more than a thousand miles from the spot where the evil deed had been done. Even if I could have been told by a revelation from heaven that Flinter had slain Mauleverer, I should have had to acknowledge that the thing was impossible. The arm of the assassin may be long; but it cannot reach across hundreds of leagues of stormy sea in order to strike its coward's blow. Yet whilst I reflected on all the perplexing contradictory facts, my conviction that Flinter was guilty grew and grew, until it took possession of my whole frame, and quite suddenly the explanation of the difficulty which had troubled me became clear to my mind. He had an accomplice—some one whom he had left behind him at Great Lorton and through whom he had slain the man he professed to love with so dog-like a fidelity.

“Ah! Mr. Flinter,” I said to myself with a bitter smile on my lips, “you little thought what a pitfall you were digging for yourself when you lured me on board the *Golden Hawk*. If I had never been your prisoner I should never have been able to confound you as I am about to do.”

I took up one of the blank telegraph forms on the table of the little office and wrote hurriedly as follows:

Chief Constable, Barton, Yorkshire:

If Mauleverer's symptoms apparently those of epi-

lepsy I strongly urge post-mortem examination. Have grave reason to suspect foul play. Return to England immediately.

FENTON, YACHT GOLDEN HAWK.

When in the dark after-days I recalled the moment when I penned the lines which were destined to influence in so terrible a manner not only my own life, but the lives of so many other persons, and when in my agony I cried aloud to God for forgiveness for the evil I had wrought unwittingly, I never failed to remember one fact. That was, that I seemed to have written that fatal message under the inspiration of some will outside my own. It was done in an instant, before I had even attempted to weigh the act itself or its possible consequences; and I was once more under the roof of the Hotel d'Angleterre before I fully realized the step which I had taken.

There is no need to dwell upon our hurried departure from Trondhjem. Branksome had recovered his calmness and self-possession before we sailed that evening; but it was evident that the terrible event of which we had heard so unexpectedly filled him both with sorrow and anxiety. He was very friendly in his manner to me; but neither he nor Fosdyke was now disposed to lighten the passing hours with the gay sallies of talk and story which had been so frequent before. They spent the greater part of every day deep in consultation with each other in Branksome's private state-room, and I soon found that Flinter was not unfrequently admitted to their confidence.

We had been three days at sea. In another four-and-

twenty hours we ought to be at Hull, and in a few hours more I would see Daisy. I was counting those hours as I paced the deck after dinner under the frosty starlit sky, when I was told by one of the stewards that Dr. Branksome wished to speak to me at once.

I found him in the handsome cabin which was nominally set apart for the private use of the owner of the ship. To my surprise Flinter was with him as well as Fosdyke. I was struck by the extreme gravity of Branksome's face when I entered the room. Fosdyke seemed to be worried and nervous; whilst as for Flinter, he received me with a scowl of hatred that he made not the slightest attempt to conceal.

"Mr. Fenton," said Branksome, who was standing and whose stately figure seemed to fill the whole cabin, "it has just come to my knowledge, within the last hour, and by the purest accident, that you despatched a message by telegraph from Trondhjem, after hearing the terrible news of Mr. Mauleverer's death. I am very sorry to take what you may possibly regard as a liberty; but I have to ask you if you will kindly inform me concerning the nature of that message and the person to whom it was addressed."

I colored up and looked round in some embarrassment. Branksome's dark eyes were bent upon me in a gaze which, to say the least, was singularly grave and almost stern, whilst Fosdyke, impatiently biting his finger-nails, seemed bursting with anxiety to hear my answer. I did not look at Flinter; but I knew well enough the spirit of which he was possessed.

For a moment I hesitated, and thought of declining to reply to the question. But I felt that I had no right,

after the way in which I had been treated by Branksome, to deal with him otherwise than frankly.

"I telegraphed, Dr. Branksome, to Miss Stancliffe. It was a simple message of sympathy and an intimation that I hoped to see her before long."

Fosdyke continued to gnaw his finger-nails restlessly. Dr. Branksome's face did not change by a single hair's breadth.

"And that was the only message you sent?" he said gravely.

"No, sir; it was not the only message," I answered, annoyed and embarrassed, yet feeling that my best plan was to tell everything. "I sent another message to the chief constable at Barton to tell him that I suspected that Mr. Mauleverer had been poisoned."

CHAPTER XI.

I MEET DAISY ONCE MORE.

THERE was a hoarse cry of anger,—a growl such as might have broken from the throat of a wild beast,—and almost instantaneously I found myself borne down to the floor, where I lay with Flinter's hands grasping my throat and his knees firmly planted on my body. I had hardly realized my position, however, when I saw Branksome throw himself upon the ruffian. Fosdyke also came to my assistance, and after a short, sharp struggle I was released from a grasp which, if it had been continued much longer, might have put a premature end to my adventures.

Branksome's indignation against Flinter was great; but it was not to be compared with that which Flinter evidently entertained against me. For the moment he seemed altogether to have lost his self-control, and I verily believe that if Branksome and Fosdyke had not been on the alert, he would there and then have murdered me before their eyes.

"Curse you! curse you!" he cried, shaking his clinched fist at me, whilst passion of the most frightful character blazed from his evil eyes. "May I be lost forever if I don't pay you for this!"

There is no need to inflict upon my readers the horrible imprecations he launched against me, or the foul epithets he applied to me. For some minutes Branksome and Fosdyke continued to remonstrate with him unavailingly. At last, however, he lapsed into a state of sullen calm, though his bloodshot eyes, his swollen veins, and the spumy froth that gathered at the angles of his mouth showed that he was still under the influence of the frenzied excitement which had led him to attack me.

So soon as Branksome was able to leave Fosdyke in sole charge of the ruffian he turned upon me, and in language the sternness of which astonished me, he said:

"You see the effect your statement has had upon this man. Probably you see in it some confirmation of the extraordinary suspicions you appear to entertain regarding him. I know not and I care not whether it is so; but this I must tell you, Mr. Fenton, that to your dying day you will regard with horror and remorse the act to which you have just confessed."

“What do you mean by such a statement? Surely I had a right—”

“Enough, enough, sir!” he cried in a voice which I hardly recognized as his. “Excuse my inability to talk to you in conventional tones or terms. But I cannot bandy words with you at present. God in His mercy grant that something may yet happen to avert the evil which it is but too certain that you have done by your inexcusable conduct.”

I tried to justify myself, but it was in vain. Feeling more like a culprit than I had ever done in my life before, I left the cabin and went to my own state-room. I am not a coward; but I confess that I passed an uneasy night, knowing that Flinter was on board the yacht. At every moment I expected to hear his footstep by the side of my berth, and to feel his hands upon my throat.

Neither Branksome nor Fosdyke had much to say to me next day. Fosdyke's nervousness was unmistakable, and when I spoke to him he answered in monosyllables. Branksome was grave and preoccupied. His manner to me was courteous, but decidedly cold. When afternoon fell we were running up the Humber, over which a light November fog hung, adding to one's depression of spirits. In another hour I knew that I should be free from the yacht. I could not bear the thought of parting on unfriendly terms from Branksome. I had fallen completely under the sway of the man's character, and had recognized that fascination to which Daisy and all others who knew him well had succumbed before me. It was almost humbly that I approached him now, and asked him to pardon me if I had been guilty of any indiscretion in sending the telegrams from Trondhjem.

He looked at me for a moment with that searching, fearless gaze which was characteristic of the man. Then he spoke :

“It is I who ought to ask you to pardon me, Mr. Fenton. I undoubtedly was guilty of a breach of good manners in speaking to you as I did last night. But I was agitated to an extent of which you can know nothing. You ask me whether you were guilty of an indiscretion in sending that message to the Barton police. Ah, sir, I dare not hint even to you the terrible suspicion that fills my mind, and that has intensified a hundredfold my grief at the death of my benefactor. If you knew the feeling of apprehension with which I am awaiting our arrival in port and the news we may find there, you will not wonder that I lost control of myself last night. I can only say now as I said then, God grant that my worst fears as to the possible consequences of your act may not be verified !”

What did his strong language mean ? It was evident that he was resolved to leave events to interpret it. Full of trouble and perplexity, I waited with impatience for the moment when we should arrive in port.

As we slackened speed off the entrance to the docks I saw a boat containing the customs and other officials of the port putting out to meet us. In the prow of the boat was a telegraph-messenger. Branksome, Fosdyke, and I stood side by side, leaning over the bulwarks of the yacht and awaiting the approach of the little craft. There was none of that joyous excitement which usually prevails on board a vessel entering port after a voyage. Our tongues were silent, and our faces showed too clearly the anxiety that possessed our minds. Above

us the leaden cloud of fog hung like a pall. Its desolation and gloom seemed to have taken possession of our hearts.

We heard the measured beat of the oars as the boat drew near, and we could see the features of the men occupying it. To me they seemed to wear an air of stern preoccupation. It was only the innocent little telegraph-boy in the prow of the boat who seemed altogether careless and unconcerned; and yet, too probably, he was the messenger of doom, whose coming we dreaded.

The gangway had been lowered, and the customs and health officers came quickly aboard, saluting us as they did so. They were followed immediately by the telegraph-messenger.

"Mr. Fenton here?" I snatched from his hand the envelope he held towards me, and without waiting to see if he had any message for Branksome and Fosdyke, I turned away to read that addressed to myself.

It was from the chief constable at Barton, and was very brief. "Thanks for message. Shall be glad of personal interview at earliest convenience."

I felt relieved. After all there was nothing very terrible in this despatch—nothing to justify the dark forebodings of Branksome. Yet with the feeling of relief was mingled a sense of disappointment. I had hoped that possibly I might have received a message from Daisy.

I turned to look for Branksome, but could see nothing either of him or Fosdyke. At that moment one of the persons who had boarded us in the customs boat came up to me and entered into conversation.

"Perhaps you would like to see the evening paper, sir. I got it just as we left the landing-stage. You will find in it the latest news about the Great Lorton mystery. But, by the way," he continued, as though a sudden light had broken upon his mind, "the Golden Hawk was the name of Mr. Mauleverer's yacht, was it not? Is it possible that you are a friend of his? Have you heard—?"

In an agony of impatience I interrupted him, and asked him to allow me to look at the newspaper.

"You will see the latest telegram there," he said, indicating a particular spot, as I took the sheet into my hands.

I saw at once that "the Great Lorton mystery" was the leading feature of the issue. It filled a column of the paper—a column adorned with big type and striking head-lines. I carefully ran my eye downwards, not taking in the sense of the words I read, until I came to the place indicated by the man, and found the following:

"LATEST INTELLIGENCE.

"*ARREST ON SUSPICION.*"

"BARTON, Friday morning.

"This morning Mr. Eastmead, Chief Constable of Barton, acting on information received, proceeded to Great Lorton Hall, and there arrested Miss Daisy Stancliffe, niece of Mr. Mauleverer, on suspicion of being concerned in his murder. Miss Stancliffe, it will be remembered, was the only known relative of the deceased, and attended his funeral on Monday as chief mourner. She is said to be a young lady of remarkably prepossessing appearance. It is rumored that evidence of a

very startling kind will be laid before the magistrates in support of the charge against her. The prisoner will be brought before a special sessions at Barton this afternoon; but it is understood that on this occasion only formal evidence will be tendered."

I read it all. The words burned themselves into my brain never to be effaced; and then—I suddenly grew sick and cold, the objects about me seemed to be spinning round, and immediately all was blank. For the first time in my life I had fainted.

As I slowly recovered consciousness, Branksome's voice was the first that I heard.

"He is coming round. Take him below."

In obedience to the curt command, I was carried down to the main saloon and laid upon a sofa. In a moment Branksome followed me. He waved aside the sailors who had attended me.

"Well," he said, "you understand now, I suppose?"

His face was almost as white as I felt that mine was.

"No; I understand nothing," I answered in faint tones.

"Do you not see, Fenton," he said, in a hurried whisper, "what it is that you have done? You have put an idea in the heads of those fools at Barton and the consequence is the arrest of Daisy."

"You cannot believe that," I said, with more energy. "Surely you do not charge me with having caused her arrest? It is some hideous mistake on the part of these clumsy Yorkshire policemen. We shall have it put right immediately. I shall go to Barton this evening, and see about it."

"My dear young friend," said Branksome, speaking in measured tones and a softened voice, "your eyes are closed to the truth. If you had never hinted at such a thing as murder, Daisy would never have been suspected. But you have lighted the match, and you cannot now prevent the explosion."

I shrank back from him in horror, "Why, you speak as though she might be guilty."

He shook his head slowly, mournfully.

"Did I not tell you that I feared for the consequences when a girl like Daisy, proud, passionate, sensitive, is subjected to such persecutions as those which she had to suffer at Mauleverer's hands?"

"But they were over! Do you not remember the letter you had from her at Bodo. Besides, the thing is ridiculous. Daisy a murderess! I shall believe that you and I are parricides sooner than suspect such a thing."

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "I knew I should shock you. But for Daisy's sake as well as yours, it is better that you should know the worst. You and I have got to save that poor girl, for remember it is *you* who have brought her into peril."

I was overwhelmed with a grief such as I had never known before. Very hurriedly we made arrangements as to the future, for I felt that we must work together if anything was to be done. He meant, he said, to go to Great Lorton the next morning. For my part I was thankful when I landed to find that there was a train by means of which I could reach Barton that night.

Barton is a pleasant agricultural town, boasting a big market-place, where once a week the cattle from the surrounding district are offered for sale, a good hotel, an

old church, a jail and a sessions house. It was ten o'clock at night when I reached the end of my journey. I hurried to the hotel and deposited my portmanteau, and then I took the porter who had carried it as my guide to the police-station.

Mr. Eastmead, the chief constable, I was told had gone home. If I had very particular business with him I might possibly see him there, but the officer on duty suggested that I had better call the next morning at ten o'clock, when I would be certain to meet him.

"My duty is pressing," I said; "I must see him to-night."

So I set forth on a walk of half a mile to the chief constable's private residence. On our way to it, the porter, who was still my companion, pointed to a high dead wall occupying one side of one of the streets through which we passed.

"That is the prison, sir," he said.

I looked at the grim forbidding wall with a shudder. Daisy was within that awful enclosure—a prisoner, made such through my accursed eagerness to suspect others, and to meddle in business with which I had no concern. The thought was enough to drive me mad. I expelled it from my mind by an effort that was almost heroic. I must keep my mind clear now even from the pangs of unavailing remorse, if I were to be able to do anything on behalf of the woman I loved.

But I seemed to be in the midst of some hideous nightmare, some black phantasmagoric vision, conjured up by a diseased brain, when I at last reached the house of the official. That it was really true that Daisy was a prisoner, suspected of the murder of her uncle, and that

I was about to speak to the very man by whom she had been arrested, was a truth which I simply could not realize.

When Mr. Eastmead heard my name, he at once expressed his readiness to see me. I was ushered into a little drawing-room furnished in the usual style of middle-class households in provincial towns—rickety walnut and faded green rep being the prevailing features of the furniture. Almost before I had time to observe the thoroughly commonplace character of the room, the Chief Constable himself appeared.

“I am glad to see you, sir,” he said; “I have been hoping to hear from you all to-day.” He glanced at the fireplace, which was still occupied by the gilded shavings which had done duty in the summer. “I am afraid you will be cold here, sir. If you do not mind stepping into my sanctum, we can perhaps settle our business more comfortably there.”

The “sanctum” was a snug little room at the back of the house, furnished with a big arm-chair and a bigger couch, a large writing-table, and a bookcase. It was clear from the perfume that still filled the apartments, that when I arrived I had interrupted Mr. Eastmead in the middle of a cigar. His first step on installing me in the big arm-chair was to produce a cigar-box. But I was far too sorely agitated to think of indulging in “the sad man’s comforter.”

“If you will excuse me,” said the officer, “I shall light my pipe. I always think more clearly when I am smoking. And now, sir, I am at your service.”

“I was shocked to see that you had made an arrest this morning in connection with the matter about which

I telegraphed to you." I could not bring myself to mention my darling's name.

Eastmead's face grew grave. "Yes, we have arrested Miss Stancliffe, Mr. Mauleverer's niece. I never had a piece of work to do in my life that I liked less; but it had to be done."

"But she is innocent," I said, trying to speak calmly. "It was not she—I never even thought of her when I telegraphed to you. The thing is quite impossible."

He looked at me keenly for a moment, and then said quietly, "I think we had better not discuss Miss Stancliffe's arrest at present, Mr. Fenton. I wanted particularly to see you because I wished to know your reasons for telegraphing to me from Norway as you did. What, in short, made you suspect foul play in the case of Mr. Mauleverer."

"Tell me first," I cried imploringly, "how Miss Stancliffe is. You have seen her. How does she bear this frightful calamity? Forgive me, but I am deeply interested in her."

"I am afraid I must not answer many questions, Mr. Fenton," he responded; "but I think I may tell you that the young lady is well in health, and that she bears her misfortunes with courage. She was a little upset at first, and did not seem to understand what had happened; but she was a great deal better before I left her in charge of the matron of the prison."

I covered my face with my hands to try to conceal the emotion that I felt. It is not in words to describe what I suffered. There was one question I longed to put to the Chief Constable—and dare not. That was whether Daisy's arrest was due to the hint I had given him.

"Now, Mr. Fenton," he resumed, "I think we had better get to business. I have asked you to tell me frankly what it was that put it into your head that Mr. Mauleverer died of poison."

I told him hurriedly all that I knew—or rather that I had suspected. I thought that if I laid everything before him, he would see with me how impossible it was that Daisy could be implicated in the horrible charge, and how strong was the evidence against Flinter. Yet, when I had told my story, I was but too conscious of the weakness of my own case. What did it all amount to? That a madman whom I met in the railway-train, and of whose identity I knew nothing, had declared that murder was about to be done at the hall, and that I had found on board the Golden Hawk a volume which had evidently been used for the purpose of studying the symptoms of poisoning by strychnia.

Eastmead listened to me with close attention whilst I told my tale, but it was not until I mentioned strychnia that his interest seemed to be really awakened.

"You said nothing about that in your telegram to me."

"No, I only thought it necessary to give you a general warning."

"And have you heard—has anybody told you the result of the *post-mortem*?"

"I have heard nothing beyond the bare fact of Miss Stancliffe's arrest."

"Ah; then I do not know whether you will or will not be surprised to hear that the autopsy has shown that Mr. Mauleverer undoubtedly died from poisoning by strychnia."

"Then," I said eagerly, "do you not see how clear it is that Flinter must be the guilty person?"

"You jump to conclusions in a surprising manner, sir. Why, Flinter by your own showing was somewhere up in the Arctic Ocean at the time the poison was administered to Mr. Mauleverer. As for the book: you have not even shown that it belonged to him. Of course he may have been an accomplice of the real murderer, but for that murderer we are bound to look, not on board the Golden Hawk, but at Great Lorton Hall or in the immediate neighborhood."

"And was there nobody else whom you could suspect, without inflicting this degradation upon a woman for whose innocence I could vouch with my life?"

"I see you are deeply interested in the lady, Mr. Fenton, and certainly she is a beautiful creature—as bonny a lass as I ever saw. I felt real sorry for her this morning. But I am afraid I must tell you we have not arrested Miss Stancliffe on *mere* suspicion."

"In heaven's name, what do you mean?" I demanded.

"Well, you have been quite frank with me, Mr. Fenton, and I shall be equally frank with you. We have discovered, first, as I have told you, that Mr. Mauleverer was poisoned by strychnia, and next that Miss Stancliffe had poison of that description in her possession shortly before his death."

"But even so—granting that she had the poison, of which I know nothing—it must have been got for some innocent purpose."

"Oh, that is a matter of course," he answered in a jocular tone. "When you are going to poison one of your friends, you don't go to the chemist's and say,

'Give me a dose of strychnia that I may get rid of old Brown.' It is always rats that you want it for. Miss Stancliffe was like everybody else. When she bought the poison she bought it for the benefit of the rats."

"But I assure you, I myself know that Lorton Hall swarmed with rats. I heard it from Miss Stancliffe's own lips whilst I was there."

"Perhaps so; but it is unfortunate that it is not the rats but Mr. Mauleverer who has been killed. But I think we must wait a little before discussing this question. I shall be very glad if the poor young lady can be proved innocent. As for the story you have told me, I think we must now try and lay hold of Gregson. He may not be a prophet, but at all events we must admit that he made a lucky hit when he declared that murder would be done at Great Lorton."

"But may it not have been a case of suicide?"

"No," replied the Chief Constable with emphasis; "I have thought it all over, and I cannot make it into suicide. You may depend upon it that it is a case of murder if it is anything at all."

The night was now far advanced, but I could not leave him until I had learned something as to the possibility of my being allowed to see Daisy. He told me that, if she herself desired it, he thought an interview between us might be managed without difficulty, and he promised to do everything in his power to further my wishes. I left him with an unshaken belief in my darling's innocence, but oppressed by the conviction that the evidence against her was strong, and that it was upon my wretched head that the responsibility for her present position must rest.

I passed a night of sleepless agony at the hotel. And here let me say that if I utterly fail to bring home to the mind of my reader all that I suffered and continued to suffer after learning the news of Daisy's arrest, it is not because I failed to realize my own share in that terrible event, nor because I was not bowed down to the earth with grief and remorse at the thought of the injury which I had unwittingly done to her. But my duty now is not to dwell upon my own feelings, or to tell how I grew perceptibly older in a few hours; how before Daisy was brought to trial my hair was streaked with white, and my haggard face was hardly to be recognized by those who had known me before. I have to continue the story of that strange series of events which must be forever connected in my memory with the great tragedy of our lives. Let the reader then try to understand, without further words of mine, that I was well-nigh mad with grief and horror at this period of my career; and that I should undoubtedly have been quite mad if it had not been for my overpowering consciousness of the fact that I had one paramount duty to discharge—the duty of rescuing my darling from the web of evil circumstances in which she had been enveloped.

It was not until I had spent two days of suspense at Barton that Mr. Eastmead brought me the glad news that Daisy, having received the letter which I addressed her on the morning after my arrival in the town, had successfully applied to the magistrates for an order admitting me to the prison.

I found my beautiful darling in the office of the Governor; for her position, her sex, and the fact that as yet she had not been committed for trial, enabled the prison

officials to exercise a considerable degree of leniency in their treatment of her.

She was terribly changed since I had seen her last on that happy night when we plighted our troth in the garden at the old hall. The color was gone from her face, the beautiful lines of which had grown painfully sharp; her lovely eyes had the strained look which one sees in some noble animal of the desert when it is in confinement; and her figure, clad in the simple black dress, looked very frail and unsubstantial.

With a cry that went up from the very bottom of my heart I ran to her, and clasped her in my arms, heedless of the presence of the matron. We were in a prison; she a captive lying under the most terrible of all accusations; I, the man who had been the wretched cause of her being brought there. Never surely in this world before did two lovers meet each other under circumstances so tragical. And yet I can declare before high heaven that in all my life there has been no hour more full of bliss than that which we spent there, in the mean room of the jail, under the hard eyes of the female warder, clasped in each other's arms and hardly speaking, save to exchange some word on my side of passionate devotion, on hers of a love as true and deep as mine, though a thousand times more pure and tender.

Ah, let it pass, let it pass. I cannot put down here in cold blood all that transpired in that hour of holy joy, when our souls met and mingled together under that awful shadow of doom which each would so gladly have borne alone, if only the other might have been saved from it.

But before we could part on that day when, if ever in

the pure eyes of the angels, two souls were made one under the awful baptism of sorrow, there was one task which I was compelled to discharge. A harder one was never laid upon me.

"My darling, you do not know everything," I said. "You do not know how I have wronged you; you can never imagine the cruel injury I have done you."

She looked at me with a smile as proud and bright and loving as that which a mother turns upon her first-born babe.

"Wronged me, Cyril! And you here, by my side, not afraid to share the pain and degradation in which I have been plunged! Do you think I could ever believe evil of you—even though you were your own accuser?"

"But—dearest—listen!" My voice was hoarse and low. "It was I who first suggested that your uncle had been poisoned. It was I who telegraphed to the police from Norway urging them to inquire into the matter."

For a moment she seemed puzzled, and then a smile that might almost be called one of gayety lit up her face.

"Ah, I see what you mean. But surely that is not what you can mean when you speak of having wronged me. You did what was right—what I myself would have done in your place. You suspected there had been foul play, and you behaved like an honest man. Ah, if I had only had your wit, do you think I would not have done as you did?"

"But oh, my love, my love! Do you not see that you might never have been here if I had not acted as I did?"

"Yes: and then I would never have known the real nature of the man with whose love God has blessed me. I would never have known that he was one who hurried

across sea and land to be near me in my hour of trouble, and who was not afraid even of the shadow of shame, so long as he could share it with me."

The mercy of God is infinite; and sometimes it is breathed in its highest and purest form through the dear voice of a woman.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE BAR.

I NEED not dwell upon the events that immediately followed Daisy's arrest. Too soon I was compelled to admit that the web of circumstantial evidence woven against my darling was only too close and complete. There were two examinations before the magistrates, in addition to the preliminary one; but I shall not delay my story by referring more particularly to them. At the end of the last examination Daisy was committed to the assizes at York, for trial on the capital charge.

I had been constantly in attendance upon her during this terrible time, and along with Dr. Branksome I had adopted every method of obtaining evidence on her behalf that presented itself to me. But all our efforts had been in vain. We could not adduce a single fact that tended to break down that dreadful chain of incriminating testimony which was woven against her, by witnesses both willing and the reverse.

It was after Daisy's final committal that Branksome and I quarrelled. Up to that moment I had been con-

stantly with him, and had taken his advice in every matter concerning the trial. He on his side had treated me with a gentleness and frankness which had strengthened his hold upon my feelings. He had never referred directly to the fact that it was my action at Trondhjem which had set the fatal engine of the law in motion. He had even listened to me with grave attention when I openly declared my belief that Flinter was at the bottom of the mystery, and that he had probably worked through some accomplice at the hall. When he had asked me where that accomplice was to be found, I had told him of my meeting with Gregson, and had suggested that if we could lay hands upon this man we might perhaps obtain some clue to the real origin of the tragedy.

He was evidently surprised by my account of what Gregson had said to me on my journey by rail to Great Lorton Hall; and, after considering the matter for some time, he admitted that the first step to be taken was to discover this man and learn the meaning of his declarations. The finding of Gregson was a part of our common task which Branksome took into his own hands. He knew something of the man, he told me—had known him in fact when he was in the employment of Mr. Mauleverer in Australia—and he had no doubt about his ability to discover him.

Once I ventured to ask Branksome by what right this fellow had followed and persecuted Daisy on the occasion of my first meeting with her. But on this subject he could give me no information, any more than he could with regard to the man's sinister predictions regarding the murder at Great Lorton Hill.

Up to this point, I say, I had worked in the most perfect harmony with the doctor. But now, when Daisy had been committed to take her trial at the Assizes, we quarrelled, and quarrelled bitterly and irrevocably.

"I have thought everything over carefully," he said to me, as we sat together in the hotel on the night after the examination was closed. "I have weighed all the evidence, and the position of the poor girl, and I have come to the conclusion that there is only one course to be taken."

"And what is that?" I asked eagerly.

"She must plead guilty; in which case I have no doubt that we shall be able to save her life."

I could scarcely believe my ears. For a moment I was stunned by this unexpected suggestion.

"Guilty!" I cried, when I found my voice. "You suggest that she should confess to this horrible crime—you, Dr. Branksome, who have stood in the place of a father to her, and who ought to know her innocence and purity as well as I do myself! You are jesting, surely."

He shook his head, and those deep dark eyes of his looked fixedly into mine.

"We have done our best, my friend," he said, "and we have failed. Don't let us deceive ourselves as to the truth any longer."

"Speak for yourself, sir," I cried, in a moment freeing myself from the influence which the man had so long exercised over me. "If you choose to adopt the monstrous falsehood—yes, it is a falsehood and you know it—that Daisy is guilty, then go your way, and join the band of her persecutors, and bring her to the gallows

if you can ! but don't ask me to join you in the infernal work."

"Be calm, sir," said Branksome, sternly. "You compel me to remind you how it is that Daisy's life has been endangered."

I sprang to my feet, exasperated beyond endurance by that fatal recollection. "Dr. Branksome, I owe you much in connection with this matter, and I shall try to remember my debt. But there is one thing I shall never forgive—never whilst I live—and that is that you should have been ready to desert Daisy in her hour of sorest need."

I left the room in hot indignation, and from that time we met no more as friends. I obtained an interview with Daisy—though it was more difficult to do so now that she had been committed—and procured from her the full authority which I needed to enable me to take charge of her interests during her trial. The good people of the prison pitied both her and me. Her beauty, her youth, the tie which bound us to each other, all seemed to awaken in the hearts of the officials a feeling of sympathy and good-will towards us. Even the Chief Constable, Eastmead, was friendly in his manner, and quite willing to do what he could to assist me in the task I had undertaken as Daisy's champion. In the little town of Barton, where the Mauleverer poisoning case was for weeks the sole topic of discussion, everybody knew the story of Daisy and myself; and I was conscious that as I walked through the streets I was followed by the pitying glances of the passers-by. But alas ! no comfort was brought to my soul by all this outflowing of a generous sympathy. For in my heart of hearts I knew that all

these people believed my darling to be guilty—believed it all the more certainly now that it was known that even her guardian Branksome had deserted her. I, and I only, knew her to be free from blame; and alas! I found myself as time passed less able to convert others to my view.

There was one thing I could and did do for Daisy. I procured for her at my own expense the best legal assistance that was to be obtained. Mr. Belmore, Q.C., whom I caused to be retained for the defence, was by common consent the great leader at the Criminal Bar. His silvery tongue and polished manner, combined with an unrivalled acuteness in detecting the weak points not merely in an adversary's armor but in the panoply of virtue in which every British jury is clad, had raised him to a position which very few men are able to attain even at the English Bar. I never paid any money with greater satisfaction in my life than when I disbursed the amount necessary to permit of Mr. Belmore's brief being marked with a fee of five hundred guineas and a "refresher" of one hundred guineas a day.

As second to Belmore I selected my friend Harding, with whom I had been associated at Scarborough at the time when Daisy and I first learned to love each other. His name had been mentioned to me among those of several other rising juniors on the Circuit by the attorney whom I had consulted, and I instantly selected him, believing that he would give me the assistance of a friend as well as of an advocate. And now I waited with such patience as I could command for the day when my darling would be placed on trial for her life, and when as I hoped her innocence might be fully established. I

did not of course relax the efforts I had been making to obtain counter-evidence on her behalf. Three special points engaged all my attention. I desired, first, to discover how strychnia had been administered to Mr. Mauleverer on the night of his murder; secondly, what had become of the poison which Daisy had undoubtedly procured shortly before the murder was committed; and thirdly, where Gregson—whose connection with the mystery was, I felt sure, so intimate—was now to be found. Alas! when the day of the trial opened I was still without satisfactory information on any of these points.

The case of my darling was the last on the calender at the Winter Assizes. It had been postponed at the request of our counsel, on the plea that her committal was of recent date, and that we had not been able to complete the inquiries necessary for her defence. But at last came the morning on which I found myself seated in front of the dock, in the little court in which so many tragedies of real life have been played out, and in which was now to be enacted the chief scene in the great tragedy that had so suddenly enveloped Daisy's life and mine.

I was hardly conscious of the buzz of cheerful life which filled the court whilst we waited for the appearance of the judge. All around, the people were laughing and talking with a strange and heartless indifference to the horror of the moment. There were gayly-dressed ladies in the galleries—ladies who had come provided with fans and scent-bottles and opera-glasses—Heaven help them!—to witness the stirring spectacle of the baiting of a fellow-creature to death in the name of the

law. I felt rather than saw that for a time after I had been ushered to my seat by my attorney, the eyes of these women were fixed upon me. They knew that I was Daisy's lover; and, in staring at me and commenting on my appearance, they found an occupation which served to whet their appetites for the greater treat to come. If only I could have spoken out, and said all that was in my heart at that moment with regard to those fashionable and richly-attired women, I verily believe there is not one of them who would not have slunk away in shame to the obscurity of her own home.

The counsel came in one by one, and greeted each other cheerfully. There was one, however, whose face was grave as befitted the occasion. It was Harding. He came quickly across the court to where I sat, and gripped my hand hard in silent sympathy; then turned, and took his place at the big table where our solicitor and his clerks had arranged the great pile of papers and law-books which were to be used during the trial. The prosecuting counsel for the Crown, a meagre little man with a pale face, keen eyes, and thin lips, Mr. Hawk, Q.C., was the first of the leading personages to appear. Almost directly after his arrival I saw the commanding figure of Mr. Belmore standing at the entrance to the court; and I took fresh courage as I looked into that handsome intellectual face, and remembered the great feats this man had already accomplished by his gifts of speech and mind. Whilst he was returning the salutations of his friends among the members of the circuit, I allowed my eye for a moment to wander round the court, and instantly I found that Branksome and Fosdyke were sitting together on a bench behind the seats

for the jurors. The former was eying me, as it seemed to my sensitive imagination, with mingled curiosity and compassion. I do not think there was any one in all that crowded building who was more entirely self-possessed than he was, and yet he was about to see the girl who had been as a daughter to him placed on her trial for her life,—and he believed her to be guilty. I turned with a shudder of dread, of the reason of which I was myself hardly conscious, from such a spectacle of supreme self-control. As I did so I caught Fosdyke's eye. He bowed to me and waved his hand. I knew that, like Branksome, he believed Daisy to be guilty. Indeed, after conducting her case during her appearances before the magistrates, he had readily acquiesced in my suggestion that, unless he were convinced of her innocence, he would do well to allow me to seek assistance elsewhere. But, although he had thus deserted us in the hour of direst need, I felt against him nothing of that burning indignation which possessed me whenever I thought of Branksome. He at least had never known Daisy as Branksome had done, and I had no right to blame him because he misjudged her.

There was a loud cry of "silence" from the ushers; everybody in court rose; and the judge, a little rosy-faced man with a bright good-natured countenance, entered, and bowing, in acknowledgment of the salutations of the bar, took his seat upon the bench. Then there was some little confusion whilst the Under-Sheriff was engaged in the process of getting a jury together. In my impatience it seemed to me that the trial would never be allowed to begin that day. Hours must surely already have elapsed since I took my seat in the court.

“Put up Daisy Stancliffe!” suddenly cried the clerk, and there was an audible movement of suppressed excitement throughout the crowded court. I turned and looked, and there at the bar, deadly pale, but with a sweet composure on her face such as I have seen in pictures of Joan of Arc at the stake, stood Daisy confronting those who for the moment represented the majesty of the English law. I had meant to seize her hand and kiss it there and then, before all the on-lookers. But when I saw that noble, beautiful face, over which, as it were, the very shadow of the valley of death was hanging, I was overcome with a feeling that was almost one of awe. I did not dare to intrude upon that holy calm which, like some protecting halo, seemed to surround my darling. Ah! who was I, that I should have been allowed to win the love of this priceless woman, and that to me should have been given the privilege of standing here, her only friend and champion, in the presence of a hostile world? I sent up a prayer to God for strength and courage and composure for both for us. And then I looked again, and her dear eyes shone down into mine like stars from a wintry sky, and we smiled upon each other, as those try to do who meet on the verge of an eternal parting.

“Not guilty,” in a voice that trembled a little, but that yet was heard with distinctness throughout the court, was Daisy’s reply to the demand of the clerk of arraigns. Then up rose Mr. Hawk, Q.C.; the representative of the Treasury, and in a clear cold voice began his dispassionate but all-too-terrible recital of the case against Daisy—to whom he never referred save as “the prisoner at the bar.” Briefly told, this was his story:

The prisoner at the bar was charged with the murder of Mr. George Mauleverer, an Australian gentleman, reputed to be of very great wealth, who had recently settled in England, and taken up his residence at Great Lorton Hall, in this county. The prisoner stood in the relationship of niece to Mr. Mauleverer, and it was well known to his friends that it was that gentleman's intention to make her his sole heiress. Mr. Mauleverer was a man in somewhat delicate health. He suffered from a chronic complaint of the throat, and a few months before his death he had also been afflicted by a slight epileptic seizure, which occasioned some uneasiness to himself and his medical adviser. In all his illnesses, it would be proved to the jury beyond dispute, the prisoner at the bar had been his chief, he might almost say his sole, attendant. She professed to be devoted to him, and there could be no doubt that Mr. Mauleverer entertained a sincere attachment for her. The jury, he trusted, would bear one fact in mind to which many witnesses would bear testimony. That was that the prisoner, on the occasions on which Mr. Mauleverer suffered from illness, invariably administered to him any medicine he might require with her own hands. In fact, it could be proved that the deceased had often alluded to her jokingly as his "best nurse and doctor in chief." He, Mr. Hawk, now wished to call their attention to a date of great importance, the evening of Tuesday the 24th of October last. On that day Mr. Mauleverer was not very well. He dined at an earlier hour than usual,—six o'clock,—with the prisoner at the bar and with a lady named Cawthorne, who was resident in the house in the capacity of companion to the prisoner. Nobody else

was staying at the hall at the time except the servants, nor had Mr. Mauleverer seen any visitors for more than a fortnight. After dinner it would be proved that the prisoner at the bar read to the deceased for half an hour or more, and that she then played to him on the piano until about nine o'clock, at which time, complaining of fatigue, he expressed a desire to retire to rest. When he expressed this wish, the prisoner at the bar said she would go up to his room first, and ascertain that the fire was burning, and everything in readiness for him. She left the apartment for a few minutes, ostensibly for this purpose, but in reality, as he suggested on the part of the prosecution, to prepare the fatal dose of poison which was undoubtedly administered to the man very soon afterwards. At all events, she had an opportunity at that time, if she wished it, of possessing herself of this poison. Mr. Mauleverer in the mean time remained in the drawing-room with Mrs. Cawthorne. It so happened, however, that a man-servant who had been summoned for some trivial purpose remained in the room with the deceased and Mrs. Cawthorne during the prisoner's absence. This fact was not unimportant, as it tended undoubtedly to narrow the field of inquiry when they came to investigate the circumstances of the crime.

The prisoner returned to the drawing-room, and told the deceased that his room was in readiness. He thereupon said good-night to Mrs. Cawthorne, and turning to the prisoner said, "I suppose I shall see you by and by," evidently referring to the nightly visit which she paid him when he was unwell, for the purpose of administering to him any medicine that he might need. In the course of half an hour, Mr. Mauleverer's valet, who had

attended him whilst he was preparing for rest, informed the prisoner, who had in the mean time been sitting in the drawing-room with Mrs. Cawthorne, that his master was ready to see her, and she at once went up to his room.

“Now, gentlemen,” continued Hawk, speaking in more solemn tones than he had hitherto used, “we cannot tell you what happened during the interview. The prisoner alone survives it. What we do know is that she remained for a quarter of an hour in the apartment of the deceased. Her own account of the way in which she spent that interval was given, after she had been duly cautioned, to the officer of the law by whom she was arrested. According to her statement she read a chapter of the Bible, as her custom was, to the deceased. She then gave him a powder of a kind which he was in the habit of taking at times. It was a powder of bromide of potassium, a medicine which, as you are probably aware, gentlemen of the jury, is frequently used for patients of an epileptic tendency. He took the medicine, she says, quite readily, made no remark on taking it, and, saying he was sleepy, bade the prisoner good-night. She at once left the room, and presently she herself retired to rest.”

The next piece of evidence to which Hawk called attention was a somewhat remarkable one. About half past eleven o'clock, or an hour and a half after the prisoner had left the deceased, one of the younger housemaids of the hall, who was passing along a corridor not far from the room occupied by Mr. Mauleverer, heard, as she declares, a sharp cry of pain. Unfortunately the girl, instead of ascertaining the cause of this cry, fled hastily to the servants' hall. Her account of

her conduct was that "she believed she had heard a ghost." It appeared that popular tradition declared Great Lorton Hall to be haunted, and as a consequence the servants were continually imagining that in certain parts of the house they heard various mysterious sounds. Mr. Mauleverer's room, as it happened, was somewhat remote from the other sleeping-apartments which were occupied that night. The girl never thought that it could have been from her master that this cry of agony proceeded, and so the unfortunate man was left to struggle alone with death—to which he too soon fell a victim.

The next morning, at the usual hour, the valet of the deceased, John Green by name, went into his master's bedroom. He immediately saw that something dreadful had happened. The bedclothes were in great disorder, as though the deceased had been struggling violently. On looking more closely at him, Green saw that Mr. Mauleverer was quite dead. He was lying with his face buried in one of the pillows, and he had apparently died in convulsions. In one of his hands was clutched a bed-curtain, which in his agony he seemed to have torn from its fastenings. The household was at once alarmed. The prisoner on learning what had happened professed extreme grief, and sent a messenger forthwith to summon the nearest medical man, Dr. Carrick, of Little Lorton. Dr. Carrick, who would be called before them as a witness, undoubtedly fell into a great mistake. He came to the conclusion on seeing the body that Mr. Mauleverer had died possibly of suffocation in a fit of epilepsy, and he gave a certificate in accordance with that belief. In excuse for him it might be said that he

had not the slightest reason to suspect foul play, whilst he was aware that deceased was afflicted by epilepsy. Fortunately for the ends of justice, however, suspicions were aroused; and on the day after Mr. Mauleverer's funeral, at which the prisoner at the bar attended as chief mourner, his body was exhumed, and on an analysis of the contents of the stomach it was discovered that his death was really due to a large dose of strychnia. All the evidence that could be obtained pointed to the conclusion that this poison must have been administered somewhere about the time when the prisoner last saw the unfortunate man. How could it have been administered? The answer to that question was clear. Two persons only had access to Mr. Mauleverer about the time when he unquestionably took the fatal dose. One of these was Green, the valet, and the other was the prisoner at the bar. Now, in Green's favor certain facts could at once be alleged. One of these was that he had never been in the habit of administering drugs to the deceased, and any attempt he might make to do so could hardly have failed to arouse Mr. Mauleverer's suspicions. The prisoner, on the other hand, constantly mixed and gave him his medicine. Next, all their inquiries pointed to the conclusion that Green had absolutely nothing to gain by Mr. Mauleverer's death. The prisoner, on the contrary, as he should show them presently, had everything to gain by it, provided it took place within a certain period of time. Lastly, all inquiries which had been made led to the belief that Green had not been in the possession of any poison at the time when the murder was committed. The prisoner, it would be conclusively proved, did possess poison, and

poison exactly similar to that found in the body of Mr. Mauleverer, a few days before the death of that gentleman.

Surely in these circumstances it was clear that, inasmuch as, according to all known laws, either Green or the prisoner at the bar had given the fatal dose to the deceased, it was the latter whom they had the best reason to suspect. But the law mercifully demanded in cases of this kind that some motive should be shown, some reason which was likely to have led the accused person to resort to a desperate crime. He was sorry to say that there would be no difficulty in meeting this requirement of the law on the present occasion. He would bring forward evidence to show that a violent quarrel had taken place between the deceased and the prisoner at the bar shortly before the date of the murder. The quarrel was due to a love-affair between the prisoner and a gentleman of whom Mr. Mauleverer did not approve as a pretender to the hand of his niece. There had been painful scenes between Mr. Mauleverer and the prisoner, and witnesses who were strongly prejudiced in favor of the latter would give evidence showing that there was in reality a very bitter feeling on her part with regard to the ill-usage which she conceived she had received from her uncle. This was not all, however. It would be shown that Mr. Mauleverer, having executed a will by which all his vast wealth passed unreservedly to the prisoner, had within a week or two of his death given instructions for the preparation of a second will, under which, in the event of her marrying the gentleman referred to, she would receive only a comparatively small legacy, whilst the rest

of his estate would be devoted to charitable purposes. This will had not been signed at the time of Mr. Mauleverer's death, in consequence of the temporary absence from England of his usual legal adviser, by whom it had been prepared. But the prisoner at the bar knew of its existence, and knew further that it would be duly executed so soon as the attorney returned from abroad. Here, then, they had what all must feel to be a strong motive for the commission of this crime. He did not wish to press hardly upon the prisoner, whose youth and good looks were well calculated to prepossess most persons in her favor. But the jury had a duty to discharge, and he could not see how, after hearing the evidence which he was about to lay before them, and which would bear out the statement he had just made to the fullest extent, they could find any other verdict than that the prisoner at the bar was, in very truth, guilty of having wilfully murdered Mr. George Mauleverer on the night of October 24th.

I had nerved myself to listen to this terrible indictment of my darling without showing by any outward sign the effect which it might have upon me; and up to a certain point I had done so successfully. But when the counsel spoke of the quarrels between Daisy and her uncle regarding myself, I had found it impossible to retain my composure. My agitation must have been made more visible when I heard of the unsigned will by which she was to be punished if she married me. No mention had been made of this document in the examination before the magistrate, and I was quite ignorant of its existence. When Hawk spoke of it I started visibly and looked at Daisy. Her face gave not the slight-

est sign of any kind of emotion, and I knew then that the prosecuting counsel had reason for his declaration that Daisy was aware of the existence of the document. But if that were the case how was it that the fact had only been publicly brought forward now? Alas! I remembered that *now* Branksome and Fosdyke could no longer be reckoned on our side. It must have been by Fosdyke that this fatal piece of evidence had been revealed.

I looked eagerly to where Belmore and Harding sat together, anxious to judge if I could from their faces what effect Hawk's statement had made upon them. Harding was very grave and even gloomy. Belmore, on the other hand, preserved the tranquil and confident air which had inspired me with hope when I first saw him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VERDICT.

It is not necessary to weary my readers with the whole of the evidence which was given in support of Hawk's statement. The counsel for the Crown had recapitulated the facts only too faithfully, and all that he had told the jury was borne out by the witnesses.

The first to be examined was Green, the valet, who told the story of how he had assisted Mr. Mauleverer to undress, and had seen him get into bed on the night of the murder. In the course of cross-examination he swore that deceased, though apparently somewhat weak,

was cheerful and composed when he left him. He was then questioned as follows by Belmore :

“ Did you see any medicine or any bottle that might have contained medicine of any kind near his bed when you left him ? ” — “ No.”

“ What medicine was in his room, as far as you know, that night ? ” — “ On the table in the dressing-room there was a box containing the powders which he occasionally took.”

“ Nothing else—no bottle, no powder of any kind ? ” — “ Certainly not.”

Mr. Hawk, Q.C., here said that the prosecution produced the box of powders, and that evidence would be given regarding it.

Cross-examination continued : “ You have described the condition of Mr. Mauleverer and of his bed when you entered his room next morning. Did anything else in the apartment attract your attention ? ” — “ No ; everything was as I had left it on the previous night.”

“ Was there a table near the bed ? ” — “ Yes ; there was one within reach of my master’s arm.”

“ What was on it when you left him at night ? ” — “ A copy of the Bible and a bottle of water with a glass.”

“ What did you find there in the morning ? ” — “ The Bible and the water-bottle and glass.”

“ Had the glass been used ? ” — “ No : it was turned up on the top of the bottle. I particularly observed that it was quite dry, and that the water in the bottle had not been touched.”

“ In what glass was Mr. Mauleverer in the habit of taking his medicine ? ” — “ Miss Stancliffe always used a particular glass which was kept on his drawing-room table.”

“ Had that glass been used on the night of October

24th?"—"I think so. We found that there was a little water and a slight sediment at the bottom of the glass when we examined the room the next day."

"Was any care taken of it?"—"No, sir. Miss Stancliffe told me that she had given her uncle one of his powders before she left him, and I concluded that the glass had been used for that purpose."

"And it was washed?"—"Yes: by Miss Stancliffe's orders." (Sensation in court.)

"I did not ask by whose orders it was done; but I should be glad to know what were the exact words Miss Stancliffe used when she gave you these directions?"—"She said, 'Have everything tidy in the bedroom and dressing-room.'"

"And when was that?"—"Some time on the morning of the 25th."

"Before or after Dr. Carrick had seen the deceased?"—"I am not quite certain—after Dr. Carrick's visit, I believe."

"Now, sir, on your oath, was not everything left untouched until after the doctor's visit?"—"I believe so."

"And he might have examined anything and everything in the room if he had wished to do so?"—"Oh, certainly."

"By the way, there is one other question. Are you troubled with rats at Great Lorton?"—"Oh, the rats is awful, sir." (Laughter in court.)

Mary Taylor, the maid, deposed to the time at which Miss Stancliffe retired to rest on the night of the 24th. She was then quite calm and composed. She was dressing in the morning when witness took her the news of Mr. Mauleverer's death. She seemed greatly distressed, and gave orders that the doctor was to be sent for im-

mediately. She went to her uncle's room instantly upon hearing of what had happened.

Cross-examined: "Have you ever heard Miss Stancliffe express any ill-will towards her uncle?"—"Never, sir."

"You are quite sure of that?"—"Certainly, sir. So far as I could see, she was very fond of him, even at the time when he was not very kind to her."

"Was she in the habit of praying before she retired to rest?"—"Yes, sir. She always read a little in the Bible and prayed. I was often in the room when she did so."

"Did she read and pray on that particular night?"—"She did, sir." (Sensation.)

"Now, Miss Taylor, be good enough to tell me if you have ever known Miss Stancliffe possess any poison?"—"Yes, sir; about two weeks before Mr. Mauleverer's death she showed me a small packet one night, and said that it was poison which she had procured that day at Little Lorton, and that it was to be used for the poisoning of the rats. Her uncle, she said, had desired her to procure it."

"Anything else?"—"She told me that she was nervous about having it in her possession, and that she meant to put it away in some very secure place."

"Did she say why she did not mean to use it at once?"—"Yes: she told me that she was afraid to trust any of the servants with it, and she would keep it until Dr. Branksome returned, as he would know how it ought to be used."

"Have you seen that parcel since?"—"No, sir."

"Would you know it again?"—"I think I should, sir."

Dr. Carrick, an amiable country practitioner, was the next witness called. He was unmistakably nervous, and

gave his evidence in so uncertain a manner, that even the good-natured judge lost his patience at last, and told him sharply that he was not serving the prisoner by his equivocating answers. This only made the poor man worse, and I saw that Mr. Belmore in his cross-examination was terribly bothered by him. He could not give any reason now for coming to the conclusion that Mr. Mauleverer had died of epilepsy. He was quite satisfied that he had been mistaken in thinking so.

"We have heard, Dr. Carrick," said Belmore, "that Mr. Mauleverer was in the habit of taking certain powders prescribed by you?"—"Yes, sir: bromide of potassium."

"Where were these powders prepared?"—"In my own surgery, sir."

"Is this" (producing box) "one of the boxes in which these powders were contained?"—"It is the last box that I supplied to Mr. Mauleverer. He had one before this."

"How do you know that this is the last box?"—"By the date written upon it in my own handwriting."

"Now, how many powders would such a box as that contain?"—"Eighteen."

"Just open the box and tell us how many you find there now."—"I find there are four in it."

"And how often would Mr. Mauleverer take one of these powders?"—"When required, sir. Perhaps, on an average, one every second or third night."

"One every second or third night," said Belmore. He whispered a word to Harding, who forthwith made a calculation on a sheet of paper.

"Fourteen powders are gone: that would indicate that the box had been in use, Dr. Carrick, for at least twenty-eight days before the death of Mr. Mauleverer.

Be good enough, sir, to tell me what is the date written on the box as that on which it was supplied from your surgery?"—"September 23d, sir."

"Ah! that is just thirty-three days before the night of this fatal event. Now I must ask you, Dr. Carrick, to pay particular attention to the questions I am about to put to you, and to remember that the life of a fellow-creature may depend upon your answers. Who prepared these powders?"—"I did so myself, sir. I have no dispenser."

"And where did you prepare them?"—"In my own dispensary."

"The drug, I suppose, is a perfectly simple one—the powders, I mean, had not to be compounded of different drugs?"—"No; all I had to do was to weigh the bromide of potassium and make each dose up in a separate piece of paper in the usual manner."

"Where do you keep your stock of bromide?"—"In a large glass jar on the lower shelf of the cupboard in my dispensary."

"Very good; and now, sir, answer me without hesitation, where do you keep your stock of strychnia?"—"In the same cupboard, sir."

"Ah!" Belmore looked up at the jury with a face that spoke volumes. Everybody saw the point at which he was aiming—everybody except my darling, who sat looking pale and fatigued, and almost listless, as though the whole thing were a ghastly farce which wearied her. At long intervals she raised her eyes and looked at me. It was only then that any sign of life or feeling came into her dear face.

Cross-examination continued: "You say the strychnia

and bromide of potassium were kept in the same cupboard. Now do you ever make mistakes, Dr. Carrick, in the compounding of your medicines?"—"Well, sir,—I should not like to say positively—"

"Come, come, Dr. Carrick, be frank with us. Tell me: *did* you ever make a mistake in making up your medicines?"

Belmore stood like a tower among his seated brethren. His long arm was outstretched, and his forefinger, which was pointed direct at the heart of the witness, almost seemed as though it were a rapier, by which the unhappy man had been transfixed. There was something terrible, too, in the eye of the great advocate as it flashed upon the witness, something merciless in the firmly-closed mouth with which he waited for the answer to his question. Everybody in court, I think, was fascinated by the spectacle. There he stood, motionless as a statue, and unrelenting as an inquisitor, whilst Dr. Carrick writhed visibly before him.

"You must answer the question, sir," said the judge in peremptory tones.

Breathing hard, and pausing a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, the witness spoke: "I have made a mistake once—it was years ago."

"What was it?"—"I used the wrong drug in making up a simple prescription."

"The wrong drug! Tell me the name of that drug, sir?"—"It was arsenic. My lord, this happened twenty years ago, and I assure your lordship there has been nothing—"

"Answer my question, sir, and don't make speeches," said Belmore. "You tell us that you did make a mistake

once, and that you put arsenic into your medicine instead of something else. Pray what was the result of that mistake? Did your patient take the medicine?"—"He did, sir."

"And he died?"—"Yes, to my lasting pain and sorrow he did. It was a baby, sir—"

"Don't make speeches, Dr. Carrick. You tell me that once already you have made a mistake in compounding your medicines which cost one of your fellow-creatures his life. Now, will you admit the possibility of your having made another mistake? You know your strychnia and your bromide of potassium were in the same cupboard in your laboratory?"—"No, sir, I can't admit that I made any mistake on this occasion. I got a terrible lesson twenty years ago."

"No doubt you did; but, excuse me, I did not ask you whether you had or had not made a mistake on this occasion, but whether it was or was not possible for you to do so?"—"No, sir: it was impossible."

"You are infallible now, eh?"—"Yes, sir," blurted out the unhappy man, who evidently did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

"Well, I mean to ask the jury to pronounce an opinion upon that point, Dr. Carrick. You can go now."

But before he went he was re-examined by Hawk.

"Do you recollect making up these particular powders for Mr. Mauleverer?"—"Perfectly well."

"Are you quite certain you made no mistake?"—"I am positive I did not."

"In what part of your cupboard do you keep your strychnia?"—"On the top shelf, sir."

"Now there were eighteen powders originally in that

box. Were they all made up at the same time?"—"Undoubtedly, sir."

"From the same bottle of bromide?"—"Certainly."

"Were you interrupted whilst making them up?"—"Not that I remember."

"Have you examined the four powders which remain in the box?"—"Yes, in company with my eminent medical colleague, Mr. Allgood, I have examined them."

"And do they consist of bromide of potassium or strychnia?"—"Of bromide, of course."

"Then we may take it for granted that Mr. Mauleverer had been using these powders without suffering any ill-effects from them down to the day of his death, and that all the powders left in the box after his death are perfectly harmless?"—"I apprehend that is the case."

Dr. Carrick was followed by Mr. Allgood, F.R.C.S., the eminent toxicologist, who gave convincing evidence of the real cause of Mr. Mauleverer's death. The unfortunate millionaire had evidently taken a large dose of strychnia about an hour or an hour and a half before he was heard by the servant-maid to cry out. He confirmed Carrick's statement regarding the powders remaining in the box. He had not discovered any trace of bromide of potassium in his analysis of the contents of deceased's stomach.

After him came the chemist at Little Lorton, Mr. Smirke, who told how on the 7th of October the prisoner had driven up to his shop in her uncle's carriage, and had explained that she wished for a quantity of strychnia, to be employed in poisoning the rats which abounded in the cellars of the hall. He had remarked upon the very dangerous character of the poison, and

had recommended some other method of getting rid of the vermin. Miss Stancliffe agreed with him that the poison was an exceedingly dangerous one, and had expressed her regret that her uncle wished her to procure it. She had further requested him to supply it to her in a sealed parcel, so that, in case of its being accidentally found by one of the servants, it might not be opened by mistake.

Belmore only put one question to this witness: "Supposing you were to see that parcel again, would you know it at once and be able to say if it had been tampered with?"—"Yes, I could not mistake that parcel if I saw it again."

Then came the evidence of the Chief Constable, my acquaintance Eastmead. It was terrible to hear him tell how, "in consequence of information he had received," he had felt it to be his duty to make certain inquiries regarding Mr. Mauleverer's death. At that moment I dared not have faced either Daisy or Dr. Branksome. I was thankful when Eastmead passed on to tell of the result of his search though the house, when he went there for the purpose of arresting the prisoner. It was a negative result altogether. The only drugs of any kind which he could discover were the box of powders produced in court, which he found upon the dressing-table in Mr. Mauleverer's room, and some simple medicament for the teeth, which was in the bedroom of Mrs. Cawthorne. Nowhere could he find any trace of strychnia or any other poison.

In the course of his examination he recited the statement made by the prisoner at the time of her arrest, after she had been duly cautioned to the effect that any-

thing which she said might be used as evidence against her. It was as follows :

“I went to my dear uncle’s room at about ten o’clock, after being told by his servant that he was ready to see me. I spoke a few moments to him, and then, according to our usual custom, I read to him from the Bible for a few minutes. After that I went to his dressing-room, and mixed one of his powders, taking it from the box supplied by Dr. Carrick. It was one of the ordinary powders. I am quite certain of that. He drank it off without making any remark, except that I had given him a bitter dose. He then said he was very sleepy, so I kissed him and left his room. I never saw him again alive.” The attention of the prisoner having been directed to the fact that she was known to have purchased strychnia recently, she said, “I bought the strychnia at my uncle’s request. It was to be used for poisoning the rats. I was uneasy at having such an article in my possession, and I placed the poison in a drawer in my bureau which I always kept locked. It remained there until the day after my uncle’s death. I remember entering my dressing-room then, and finding that in my grief and excitement I had left that drawer open. I have a vague recollection of feeling startled at the thought that some one might have got at the poison, and I resolved to make it more secure; but whether I threw it into the fire as I originally intended, or hid it somewhere else, I cannot at this moment remember. I shall remember all about it soon, I feel certain; but I was so much confused at the time with grief and horror, that my mind was in a whirl, and I hardly knew what I was doing. I fear I am not much

better yet, but perhaps by and by I shall be all right again."

To my surprise the next witness called was Daisy's own familiar friend, Mrs. Cawthorne. Her distress, however, was evident, and her testimony did little to strengthen the case of the prosecution. She was asked regarding the conduct of Mr. Mauleverer after he had learned what had passed between Daisy and myself; and she was compelled to say that the millionaire had betrayed very great excitement, and had treated his niece for a few days with extreme harshness. She, however, Mrs. Cawthorne declared, had behaved through it all "like an angel—and indeed, my lord, if you knew her, you would know that she is an angel, the best that ever lived," cried the good woman, despite the attempts of Hawk to keep her to the point. I felt as if I could have embraced her on the spot.

Cross-examined by Mr. Belmore: "You said that Mr. Mauleverer showed great excitement and treated the prisoner with harshness 'for a few days.' How long, Mrs. Cawthorne, was that before his death?"—"He changed for the better about a fortnight before his death—about the time when Dr. Branksome and Mr. Fosdyke left the hall."

"And just before the 24th of October, what was the nature of his relations with his niece?"—"He was on excellent terms with her. On the very day on which he died, I told her that I felt certain that all would come right between them in the end."

"And did she make any reply?"—"She said she hoped it would be so, as it would be miserable both for her and for her uncle to live in perpetual estrangement."

Fosdyke was the next witness. He produced Mr. Mauleverer's will, and, amid a general murmur of excitement, gave some details as to the amount of his wealth. By the will that had been duly executed in the month of August in London, the prisoner inherited everything. Early in October, he (the witness) had gone down to Great Lorton Hall on business, and had there received instructions from Mr. Mauleverer to prepare a second will, by which, in the event of the prisoner marrying Mr. Cyril Fenton, the property, which under the first will was to be vested in trustees for her benefit, was to be applied to the erection and endowment of public hospitals in the Australian colonies, with the exception of a sum of £50,000, which was to be paid to Miss Stancliffe on the day of her marriage. When these details were given I thought that the people in court, and especially the well-dressed women in the galleries, turned to my darling with more kindly looks than those with which they had hitherto regarded her. Poor fools! They could look upon that sweet face, and not read there the plain signs of purity and innocence. Yet no sooner did they know of the wealth which was now hers than they began to doubt and hesitate, and allow the strong conviction of her guilt which they had previously entertained to be disturbed. It was incredible to them that a woman who was at this very moment the owner of millions should be a vulgar murderess!

There was one part of Fosdyke's evidence, however, which told heavily against us. It was that in which he related how, at the request of Mr. Mauleverer himself, he had made Daisy acquainted with the terms of the new disposition of her uncle's property.

“And what did she say in reply?” was the question put by Hawk.

Fosdyke adjusted his *pince-nez*, and, with a momentary assumption of that air of pert self-satisfaction which had distinguished him in happier days, but which had undoubtedly been missing of late, said: “Miss Stancliffe is a lady, sir. I did not expect any show of vulgar emotion when I told her of what was practically her disinheritance, and I was not disappointed.”

“And how comes it, sir,” cried Belmore, rising to cross-examine him, “that this will has never yet been executed?”—“I was leaving the hall, immediately after taking Mr. Mauleverer’s instructions, for Norway, where I had business to transact on his behalf. The fair copy of the will had to be made by my clerks in London, and I myself suggested that the matter might stand over till my return.”

“Ah! You were going to Norway, you say; rather a stormy voyage at this time of the year; and you would of necessity be leaving your client, a delicate old man, for several weeks, yet you did not think it necessary to complete his will before your departure?”—“I did not.”

“Now, sir, are you quite sure that Mr. Mauleverer was in a proper state of mind at that time to execute a will?”—“I should certainly say he was; but I am no doctor.”

“Was he not under the influence of an extraordinary degree of excitement about that period?”—“He was certainly very much excited.”

“Would you be surprised to hear that his excitement was such as to lead him to employ one of his servants to abduct Mr. Fenton, the gentleman towards whom he

appeared for some reason or other to entertain so extraordinary an antipathy?"

It was Daisy's turn to start and look surprised at this question, as, indeed, most persons in court did. I had never told Daisy the truth about my voyage to the north, nor should I have allowed that truth to be made known now but for the imperative demands of Mr. Belmore.

Fosdyke was manifestly disconcerted by the question.

"Come, sir," cried Belmore, "I must have an answer."—"I heard something of it."

"Heard something of it! Why, were you not aboard the ship in which that gentleman"—pointing to where I sat—"was abducted?"—"Yes; I know that such an abduction took place by the orders of Mr. Mauleverer."

"Now, upon your solemn oath, did you not think that the deceased was not in a fit state of mind to manage his own affairs? and was not that the real reason why you never completed the execution of the will?"—"I certainly thought him very much excited and prejudiced on that particular point, and I felt that on the whole it would be better to give him time for reflection before completing the will."

"In fact, you are prepared to swear that when you left him two weeks before his death, he was so much excited that his mind was not in its normal condition?"—"I think so."

Fosdyke was the last witness of any importance. It was now five o'clock, and everybody in court was exhausted. No one, therefore, was surprised when the judge announced that at this point the trial would be adjourned till the next day. Daisy was instantaneously spirited out of the dock; but before she left the wait-

ing-room below I was allowed to have a momentary interview with her. She was wan and worn; but her sweet composure enabled me to keep up my courage in her presence, and to assure her that, so far as I knew, all was going well.

Alas! any delusions I might have entertained on that point were only too quickly dispelled. I had hardly finished my simple dinner at the Station Hotel, when Harding appeared at the door of my room to tell me that Mr. Belmore desired to have an immediate interview with me.

I followed my friend to the room of the great advocate, who was also staying at the hotel. I found Mr. Belmore and our solicitor, Mr. Bryce, in serious consultation.

"I sent for you, Mr. Fenton," said the famous lawyer, "that I might have a little frank talk with you. I understand that you are really the principal friend of Miss Stancliffe, and I have heard of the relationship in which you stand to each other. Now I want to tell you at once that she is in an almost desperate position. We shall do our best for her to-morrow, of course; but I must say candidly that I see no hope of avoiding a conviction. I have only two points to make—one is the possibility of a blunder on the part of the doctor in preparing Mr. Mauleverer's medicine, and the other the chance that Mauleverer may have committed suicide. But I do not think I ever had a stronger case to meet, nor have I ever been compelled to trust to more worthless straws than these."

I heard him with a dread that seemed to render me voiceless.

"Yes," he continued, "we must not deceive ourselves. Everything is against us. But I am anxious to save this poor child if I can. I do not believe her to be guilty, and I hope that something may yet turn up to prove her innocence. I heard all that you have told my learned friend here, and I wish to give you some advice. You must move heaven and earth to find out, first, what has become of the strychnia which Miss Stancliffe bought,—for I do not believe that it has been destroyed,—and next where the man Gregson, of whom you have told Mr. Harding, is to be found. In my opinion he possesses the key to this mystery. But the first step you should take is to obtain a power of attorney from Miss Stancliffe, enabling you to act in relation to all her affairs as fully as she herself could do. This must be obtained, if possible, before her conviction; and Mr. Bryce, who has an order for an interview with her, will get it from her to-night."

Then the great man shook me by the hand, and, expressing his desire to help me in every possible way, politely bowed me from his room.

I have no heart to write of the events of the next day. There was again the eager crowd of sight-seers in court, and again all the actors in the dismal tragedy appeared in their old places. The jury looked jaded after their night of confinement at a neighboring hotel; and I was conscious that not merely upon myself, but upon my darling, the awful ordeal of the previous day, and of the sleepless night which followed, had told heavily. But she preserved the same air of sweet serenity which had distinguished her from the first.

Mr. Hawk's speech for the prosecution was the coldest,

clearest, and most merciless exposition of the facts that could by any possibility have been laid before the jury. He was no novice at his work; and I shudderingly felt when he sat down that he had not left a loophole by which Daisy could escape. That Mr. Mauleverer was undoubtedly poisoned by strychnia on the night of October 24, that the prisoner was the person who must have committed the crime, and that she had a strong motive for committing it—these were the three points which he labored to establish beyond the power of refutation; and it was only too clear that he did establish them in the minds of nearly everybody in court.

Mr. Belmore took a very different line. His desire evidently was to get away as far as possible from the evidence, and in a speech which was full of impassioned and eloquent pleading, he dwelt upon the difficulty of imagining that a young girl like Daisy could ever have conceived, much less could have carried out, so deadly a plot against the life of her relative and benefactor. Nothing but absolutely convincing evidence could justify the jury in finding a verdict against her. But in this case where was there any absolute demonstration of her guilt? Who could say that Mr. Mauleverer had not, under the influence of the excitement from which he was undoubtedly suffering, committed suicide? and in that case everybody knew the proverbial cunning with which a madman sought to hide the traces of his acts; but even if this hypothesis were to be rejected, was it not possible, and even probable, that weak muddle-headed Dr. Carrick might have made another mistake, and by inadvertence given strychnia instead of bromide of potassium to his patient? At all events, with these

two possibilities staring them in the face, the jury would incur a terrible responsibility if they returned a verdict of guilty against the prisoner.

I think that if the jury had given their verdict then it would have been in Daisy's favor. But the summing up of the judge, clear, careful, and impartial, destroyed the effect of Belmore's eloquent special pleading.

I sat as in a dream, whilst the tedious formalities connected with the retirement of the jury were carried out. And then came half an hour of awful suspense, during which everybody remained in court save my darling and the judge. I still recall with a sickening sense of horror that sudden lull in the hum of general conversation, which told us that the jury were returning to deliver their verdict. I see the judge hurrying back to the bench; I see the twelve men with their grave set faces slowly filing into the box; I hear, as though from a vast distance, the calling over of the names, and the demand of the clerk, "How say you, gentlemen, do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?" And then I am on my feet, with arms stretched out to where my love stands, deadly white but more beautiful than ever, with hands clasped and eyes turned towards heaven, which has just heard the monstrous verdict that is to brand her name with infamy and cut short her life upon the scaffold. For the jury have returned a verdict of "Guilty," and our last hope has been destroyed.

Some one draws me back into my seat, and implores me, for her sake, to remain calm. I try to obey; and I sit trembling from head to foot, amid the dread silence which now falls upon the crowded court, whilst, in the fewest possible words, the man to whose hand the wield-

ing of the awful sword of justice has been intrusted pronounces my darling's doom.

And then I wake as from a trance. Daisy is gone; the judge has departed; counsel and solicitors, jurymen, witnesses and spectators are all hurrying away, as though from the theatre when the play is ended. Some one takes my arm. It is Harding, who has had time to doff his wig and gown, and who now leads me unresistingly from the hateful spot.

CHAPTER XIV.

A RIFT IN THE CLOUDS.

Two days elapsed before I was allowed to see Daisy after her condemnation. Even then I should hardly have been permitted to have an interview with her but for certain powerful influences which had been brought to bear on her behalf. Immediately after pronouncing sentence of death the judge had sent for Belmore, and had told him that he was by no means satisfied with the case as it stood, and that he had a strong conviction that the whole truth had not yet been learned. He found that Belmore entirely shared his views, and from him he heard of me and of the efforts which I was making to procure proof of my darling's innocence. It was the good judge who smoothed the way for me with the prison authorities, and who made it possible for me to have free communication with Daisy in her cell.

But it must not be supposed that we—for Harding

had formally devoted himself to my service in the task in which I was engaged—were idle during the two days of waiting before I was admitted to an interview with Daisy. Idle! how could we be idle? It was now the 6th of December, and I had already been warned that the day on which the martyrdom of my darling was to be carried out was the 28th of the same month. But three weeks were given to us, therefore, in which to establish her innocence. Even Harding—good, kind, never-to-be-forgotten friend!—declared that neither for food nor for sleep must one moment of that precious time be wasted unnecessarily. What then, think you, was my frame of mind?

Within a few hours of the passing of the sentence Harding was in London, where he secured the services of the most eminent private detective of the day. The special mission of this man was to find Gregson. My work on that dark day on which the trial ended was of a different kind. Putting all remembrance of the last few weeks aside, I went to Branksome and Fosdyke and appealed to them to assist me in the task I had undertaken.

Dr. Branksome was just the same as he had ever been. Yes, I bitterly reflected, he was just the same; as easy, cool, pleasant in his manner, now when Daisy was lying under sentence of death, as he had been on that first morning of my acquaintance with him, when he did the honors of the yacht for her and for me. I could not bear the thought of this cynical selfishness. I had been angry against him when I first knew that he believed Daisy to be guilty. Now I despised him for his heartlessness, and would willingly have turned my

back upon him forever, if it had not been that I felt he might give me help in the work of saving my darling.

But very soon I found that this was not to be. I again told him my conviction that Flinter was the real instigator of Mr. Mauleverer's murder, and I repeated the reasons which led me to think so. It was the first time that Fosdyke had heard the story of my finding of the book on "Forensic Medicine" on board the yacht, and of the way in which it opened at the pages dealing with poisoning by strychnia. I thought he seemed startled by my statement. It had no effect upon Branksome, however.

"I see what you wish me to do, Fenton. You are anxious that I should find a victim for the gallows in the place of poor Daisy, and you suggest Flinter for the purpose."

"And is that the way in which you speak of the girl whom you have known since she left her mother's arms and whom you profess to love?" I cried, in my indignation. "Dr. Branksome, if any one had asked me what I thought of you a few weeks ago, I should have said you were one of the noblest and truest men on the face of the earth; but if any one were to put the question to me now, I should be forced to tell him that I had found you to be false as a friend and mean and heartless as a man—one who can sit here in the full enjoyment of every luxury"—I had found the two at dinner—"when the child who has looked up to him as a father is lying in the condemned cell! Aye, and who can even answer the prayer that he would join in the attempt to save her from her doom, with a cold sneer!"

He heard me without moving a muscle of his face,

and when he replied he spoke in his usual voice. It was just as pleasant and equable in its tones as it had ever been.

“I wish you success and Godspeed with all my heart, Mr. Fenton; and for the sake of Daisy I forgive your injustice towards myself. But I tell you this, sir, plainly: I have been convinced of her guilt by the evidence laid before the court; and whilst I am willing to join you in making every effort to obtain for her the mercy of the Crown,—nay, Mr. Fosdyke will tell you that I am already taking steps for that purpose,—I am not prepared to try to save her, whom I believe to be guilty, by throwing her sin upon another whom I know to be innocent.”

What could I do in appealing to a man whose very cruelty was founded upon his love of what was right? I could not answer his logic, and I saw that it would be useless to upbraid him. But in my heart I hated and despised him.

“Then,” I said at last, seeing that no help could be hoped for here, “I shall act for myself, and if I have to spend every farthing I have in the world and to devote every day that remains to me of life to the task, you may depend upon it that I shall yet confound you all by proving her innocence.”

Of my interview with Daisy, when at last I was admitted to her in the condemned cell at the old Castle, I shall say nothing that does not bear directly upon the subsequent events. She was changed greatly when I saw her; but she declared that I was far more seriously altered than she was. And probably she was right; for I had nothing of that noble courage and resignation

which had borne her up through all this time of agony. But I dared not spend the precious minutes in lovers' talk. I had other work to do for her sake.

My first business I felt must be to get from her her own theory, if she had one, regarding the murder; and to prepare her way for that, I told her freely all my own suspicions, and the story of my abduction, of which she had only heard for the first time during the course of the trial.

"And you really believe that my uncle caused you to be spirited away in that fashion? Depend upon it, dearest, you are entirely deceived. My uncle was innocent."

"Then who could have originated the plot?"

"Flinter must have done so. Let me tell you all I know about him. He has been employed for nearly eight years at my uncle's chief station at Wangoora—the place where we lived. I am told that he had been in some serious trouble, and that my uncle, who was usually one of the kindest as well as one of the most simple-hearted men, befriended him. Very soon after he came to the station as an ordinary shepherd he saved my uncle's life when he was nearly drowned in crossing a swollen river on our run. That, you may be sure, was never forgotten by my uncle. He very quickly raised him to one of the chief posts on the estate, and at the time that I came to live at Wangoora, six years ago, he was the constant companion of my uncle in his journeys, and had evidently secured his confidence."

"But you spoke of him to me as dangerous."

"Yes; he is dangerous, and bad too. I very soon discovered that. But I cannot for a moment imagine that

he would have plotted against his benefactor's life. He had everything to lose and nothing conceivable to gain by my uncle's death."

That was perfectly true, and it was the one great stumbling-block in the way of my theory regarding the murder. Flinter undoubtedly *had* nothing to gain by it.

"Daisy," I said, "you must forgive me for questioning you on a subject that has long puzzled me, but about which I saw that you did not wish to tell me anything. I want to know all that you can tell me about that man whom I saw in the railway-station here, on the day we first met. It is necessary that you should tell me all, my darling."

She blushed slightly, and then a faint smile lighted up her worn face. "Ah, how happy an accident it was that led me to the carriage where you were seated that day! I should have been without a friend now, but for that."

"But about this man—Gregson?"

"I should have told you all about him if there had been any opportunity of doing so after you spoke to me at the hall. For, do you know, that at one time he had tried to make me believe that he was in love with me, and when he found that I cared nothing whatever about him, he began to persecute me in a mean, paltry kind of way, till I positively became afraid of him."

"Where was it that he first began to annoy you?"

"At Wangoora, about three years ago. You see he was my uncle's confidential clerk, and came a great deal to the house. He had not then given way, as I fear he has done now, to bad habits; and he was a great friend of Dr. Branksome's. I never cared for him—in the

least." Dear heart! she looked up at me with the happy smile of a maiden who tells her story for the first time to the man she loves, and for a moment we forgot all about the prison-bars, and the two women who sat mutely watching us at the other end of the cell.

"When he found that I did not care for him, he became, as I said, very disagreeable. He would try to waylay me and hint dreadful things about having me in his power; and I think that very soon he came to hate me as much as he had once professed to like me. Then he became careless and disobedient in his work, and he quarrelled with Flinter and was insolent to Dr. Branksome, and the end of it all was that he was dismissed."

"And what happened then?"

"Oh, a great deal. He professed to have discovered some dreadful plot in which we were all engaged for the purpose of imposing upon my uncle. I laughed at him at the time; for I knew of course that there was no plot of any kind, and I little dreamt of what was coming. But the man became hateful both to me and my uncle, especially when we found that he had actually followed us to England. I have never seen him, however, since that day at York."

"Tell me, dearest, who were the persons whom he charged with being in this plot?"

"Oh, I believe I was the chief sinner of all. He several times met me when I was alone, and accused me of it. Then he hated Flinter, and said dreadful things about him, and even about Dr. Branksome. But I never knew what the plot was to which he referred."

"Did Dr. Branksome know what the man was saying about him?"

"Of course he did. Why, I think that, next to me, he hated Dr. Branksome the most, and I remember his saying once that he could have him sent to penal servitude if he liked."

"In Dr. Branksome's presence?"

"Yes."

I was startled by what I had heard, for I remembered how Branksome had disclaimed any knowledge of the meaning of Gregson's language to me in the railway-train, when I had reported it to him. Some strange fancies stole into my brain.

"Tell me, Daisy, what do you think of Dr. Branksome himself?"

She glanced up at me, and that troubled, doubtful look which I had noticed more than once at Scarborough passed over her face.

"I do not know how I can answer your question," she said, after a pause, and speaking very slowly, as though weighing all her words. Dr. Branksome is a wonderful man. I never met any one like him. When I am with him he can make me do everything he wishes—or nearly everything. It is only when I am away from him that I doubt and fear him."

"Then you do doubt and fear him sometimes?"

"Yes: when he is not near me. When he is, I hardly seem to have any will of my own. It is very strange. I cannot explain it. Sometimes I think he is a very, very good man; but there are times when I think very differently of him."

"When did you see him last, Daisy?" I asked, feeling as though I were on the brink of some great discovery.

"The day before the trial began. Did you not know? Has he not told you?"

"He has told me nothing."

"That is strange; for he promised that he would do so. He brought me my will, which it seemed that it was necessary I should sign before I was tried."

"Your will! I don't want to pry into your private affairs, my darling, but I must ask you if you left anything to Dr. Branksome?"

"Anything! Why, I left everything to him, of course—that is, everything but some little things I want you—" She stopped, blushing rosy red.

"Do you mean you left all your uncle's fortune to Dr. Branksome?"

"Yes: you see he was the trustee appointed by my uncle, and he did not need to tell me that he was the only person to whom I could leave my uncle's money."

In an instant I saw, as when the blaze of summer lightning illuminates the wide landscape for miles at a stretch, the whole conspiracy, in the toils of which my darling had been caught. But that vivid flash of consciousness faded almost as quickly as it came, and left me once more groping in the twilight—not, however, before I had taken my bearings, as it were, afresh, and had seen that our real position was altogether different from what, up to that moment, I had imagined it to be.

"Daisy," I said, trying hard to subdue my excitement, "are you aware that the power of attorney which you signed the other day makes me for the present absolute master of all your property? You have constituted me your other self. Whilst you are in confinement here, I can go where I will and do what I please in your name,

as your representative. Are you willing that I should make full use of these powers?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, "who can use them better?"

"Then, darling, I shall make my first use of them by putting a veto upon you. I want you to promise that you will on no account allow Dr. Branksome to see you until we meet again. You know they will allow no one to visit you now unless you desire it. Will you promise?"

"I will promise anything you wish."

"Then I must tell you that I shall go direct from here to Great Lorton, in order that I may search the hall from the roof to the cellars, if necessary, for proof of your innocence. The first thing I have to find is that parcel of strychnia. Can you help me?"

She shook her head doubtfully. "I wish I could; but I cannot recall what I did with it."

"By the way," I said, "do you know this?" I took from my pocket the rusted knife or dagger which I had found on my bed on the night that I slept at the hall.

She looked at it, and then the color dyed her cheeks once more.

"Where did you find it?" she asked.

"In my bedroom—the haunted chamber."

"Ah, I remember!" she cried, "I remember now where I placed the poison! It is in the secret passage leading to the haunted room."

"Do you indeed remember, my darling? Are you sure?"

"Quite, quite sure. Stay, let me tell you all. On that night when my uncle heard, after he had said good-night to you, of what had passed between us in the garden, he came to my room. I had not gone to bed;

for I was thinking of all that you had been saying to me. We had a dreadful scene, as you know. Some one had poisoned his mind. He told me I should never see you again, and I was in despair. Then I remembered that you were to sleep in the haunted room, and that there was a private stair leading to it from the drawing-room corridor. I resolved to send you a letter, so that you might not leave the hall thinking that I was unfaithful to you. My maid and I had discovered the passage shortly before, and knew that it led up to your room, which was entered by means of a sliding panel. I wrote the note, and gave it to her to take to your chamber when she was certain you were asleep. She went with it; but returned almost immediately, to say that she could not move the panel. We looked about for something by which to open it, and I saw this old knife in its sheath. It was given to me as a curiosity, years ago, by an old sailor. Taylor, my maid, took the knife, and went back to your room. When she returned she told me that she had placed the note upon your pillow, but that at the moment when she did so you had moved in your sleep; and in her fright she had left the room at once, forgetting to bring the knife with her."

"Then there was no ghost but the one you sent to me, darling! But about the strychnia; for that is the most important thing of all now."

"I placed it on a shelf over the door by which the secret stair is entered. It was the sight of the knife which reminded me immediately of the place."

I rose breathless with excitement.

"My darling, by God's help, all will yet be well. But I must not delay a moment longer now."

I strained her in my arms, and kissed her passionately. Half an hour afterwards I was on my way to Great Lorton, having dispatched a telegram to Mr. Eastmead, begging him to meet me at the Barton railway-station.

I found the Chief Constable waiting for me on the platform at Barton. Like other men "in the force," he was probably happier when engaged in bringing a criminal to justice than when he was saving an innocent person from an unjust punishment. But in Daisy's case he showed as much zeal as though he had been one of her personal friends, and I had no need to complain of the interest he displayed when I told him the errand upon which I was bent, and the important facts which I had elicited during my visit to the prison.

"I want you to accompany me in my search through the hall, Mr. Eastmead, both because you will be an unimpeachable witness regarding any discoveries I may make, and because I may need to appeal to the aid of the law in my task. For you will understand that I shall not do things by halves. This power of attorney makes me Miss Stancliffe's legal representative, and I shall use all my rights under it, not only to prove her innocence, but, if possible, to discover who the guilty person is."

"You have set yourself a hard task, Mr. Fenton," he replied; "but there is some hope of success; for I am quite certain that, as yet, we do not know the truth."

We had to walk from Little Lorton station to the hall. My interview with Daisy had taken place in the early morning, and it was barely two o'clock in the afternoon when I found myself once more standing on the broad terrace in front of the quaint old house.

The first person I saw was the evil-omened Flinter. He came forward with an insolent air and demanded my business.

"My business, sir, might very well be to give you into custody for the outrage which you committed upon me. As it is, I am here in the exercise of my rights, and have nothing to say to you."

"You won't get into the hall, at all events," he said doggedly.

"None of that nonsense," interposed the Chief Constable, "or I shall have to take you into my hands, my man. Mr. Fenton, I imagine, is the only person who has any rights here, if it comes to that."

At that moment I saw Dr. Branksome sauntering along the terrace, from the direction of the garden. He looked genuinely surprised when he saw who it was with whom Flinter was having this altercation. He came forward with quickened step, and his usual air of bland gravity.

"Mr. Fenton! Mr. Eastmead! This is an unexpected pleasure."

"Possibly," I said, all the suspicions of the man which during the last few hours had risen in my mind betraying themselves in my face and voice. "I am here, however, Dr. Branksome, as the representative of Miss Stancliffe, and, as you will see, I am accompanied by Mr. Eastmead, as the representative of the law."

"I think, sir, you forget yourself," replied Branksome. "I have no wish to cast any doubts upon the sincerity of your interest in the unfortunate lady whose guardian I am, but I have the honor to be the only person who can claim to be her legal representative."

My hot blood mounted to my cheeks, and I was about to answer him angrily, when Eastmead again interposed.

"This gentleman, Dr. Branksome, acts under a power of attorney from Miss Stancliffe. You will hardly dispute his right to represent her when you know that."

"A power of attorney! Monstrous! Impossible! She would never have signed such a document without consulting me."

"Dr. Branksome," I said, "we will not bandy words, if you please. I hold this power of attorney, and I thank God that I do so; and now I am going into this house to look for, and I believe to find, the proofs of the innocence of the girl whom you professed to shield and left to die."

"My dear fellow," retorted Branksome, with just the suspicion of a sneer in his tones, "why will you be always so melodramatic? If you had told me at first what your object was, you would not have needed any power of attorney to get admittance to this house. By all means enter and welcome!"

He threw open the door in front of which we had been standing, and, bowing politely, waited till we had preceded him.

In the hall I turned and said, "I have come here, Dr. Branksome, to make a general search through the house; and although, as Miss Stancliffe's legally-appointed representative, I can take any course I please, I have no objection to your accompanying me in that search."

"My good sir," he retorted, "I think you must really excuse me. You have not come here in a very friendly fashion this afternoon, and you can hardly be surprised if, under the circumstances, I conceive that it may be

more satisfactory to yourself, as it certainly will be to me, that you should go about your work in your own way. At the same time, whenever you wish for luncheon you will find it on the table, and I shall be happy to join you. Of course, as Miss Stancliffe's representative, you need have no feeling of delicacy about making your wishes in that matter known."

His perfect coolness and composure had their effect upon me, and that lightning flash in which I had seen him for an instant as a villain of colossal iniquity faded more and more completely from my memory.

But I lost no time in beginning my search. Mary Taylor, Daisy's maid, was summoned and came quickly, as did Mrs. Cawthorne, who had returned broken-hearted to the hall at the close of the trial. I soon explained to the girl that what we wanted to see was the door leading to the private staircase. She looked somewhat confused when I told her this; probably she recollected the last occasion on which she had herself made use of that door.

We found that the door was in one of the panelled recesses of the drawing-room corridor. It had no handle, and any one might have passed it a hundred times without perceiving its existence. Taylor pressed the door in the middle, and it slowly opened, revealing a staircase, narrow, dirty, and dusty, beyond.

"Mr. Eastmead," I said, "you represent the law, and I leave it to you to make the first attempt to verify the statement which Miss Stancliffe has made to me."

"Bring a light here," said the officer; and one of the many servants, who were watching us in wonder, darted into the adjoining room, and quickly reappeared with

a lighted wax-candle. Taking this in his hand, Eastmead passed through the door. I could see him moving the candle to and fro, and then he uttered a slight exclamation, and closed the door upon us. Immediately afterwards he opened it, and came out into the corridor, begrimed with dust and cobwebs, but wearing an air of triumph on his face.

"I have found this on the narrow ledge or shelf above the door inside," he said.

He held out to me, as he spoke, a small parcel wrapped in paper that had once been white. I seized it with feverish eagerness. Pasted upon it was a label bearing in writing the address, "Miss Stancliffe, Great Lorton Hall," and in print the word "Poison" in large letters, and the name and address of Smirke, the Little Lorton chemist. The parcel was sealed, and we saw that the seal bore Smirke's name.

I could not restrain the cry of joy and thankfulness which broke from my lips.

"My friends," I said to the men and women around me, "your poor mistress will yet be saved."

Mrs. Cawthorne burst into tears, as did most of the women. I can only answer for myself among the men. I could not keep back the tears of joy which were welling from my eyes.

It now occurred to me that, as most of the rooms in the hall had been searched by the police under Mr. Eastmead himself at the time of Daisy's arrest, I might begin my own investigation by exploring this secret passage in which we had already found so important a piece of evidence. Bidding the servants remain where they were, we slowly climbed the narrow winding stair. It

led into a corridor equally narrow and very long, unlighted and ill-ventilated, so that more than once the candle which Eastmead carried seemed to be on the point of expiring.

At the end was apparently a blank wall of dark oak. But looking closely at it, I detected the place where the girl had introduced the knife on the night when she brought to me the note from Daisy. I had brought the knife with me, and in another instant, by means of it, I had caused the panel to slide into a recess. It revealed an opening of the depth of the wall, beyond which there was another panel. This I was able to move without difficulty. I pushed it aside with my hand. Still the way was barred, but upon this occasion it was by nothing more substantial than the heavy leather hangings of the haunted room. Great ingenuity had been shown in the arrangement by which an opening could be made at will through these hangings, without any evidence of its existence being afforded to an occupant of the room.

Once more I found myself in that well-remembered chamber. It looked cold and dark despite its handsome furniture. Apparently it had not been occupied since the night when I slept there. I opened the door leading into the little sitting-room where I had breakfasted by myself on the morning on which I left the hall. To my surprise it showed signs of having been recently occupied. There was a book lying on the table. I recognized it instantly. It was the copy of Guy and Ferrier's "Forensic Medicine" which I had studied so intently during my imprisonment on board the yacht.

"We are in the enemy's stronghold," I said to Eastmead. And I bade him take the book in his hand and

see where it opened. He did so with the result which I expected.

He shook his head gravely. "I think, Mr. Fenton, we shall be justified in taking a very close look at anything we can find here."

There were several books on the table. They were for the most part old account-books, some of them bearing Flinter's name. They apparently related to transactions which had taken place some years previously in Australia. One volume was of a different kind. It was a cheap metallic memorandum-book, such as a man like Flinter might very well have used for the purpose of keeping notes of incidents of importance. Eastmead took it up and opened it. For some time he appeared to be examining it, with a look of bewilderment on his honest face.

"I can't make anything of this, can you? Is it Greek?"

He handed the open book to me, and to my disappointment I saw that, whatever might be the nature of its contents, I was none the wiser through possessing it. Every page was covered with cabalistic marks like nothing I had ever seen before.

"I think we may as well leave that behind us," said the Chief Constable. "But I am going to take these other books to examine at my leisure."

I acquiesced for the moment in his proposal to leave the little note-book in cipher where we had found it; but before we had completed our close examination of the two rooms, I had changed my mind; and, without any scruple regarding the robbery I was committing upon the unconscious Flinter, I slipped the volume into my pocket.

It would be tedious to tell of the long hours which we spent in examining the other portions of the hall. Nowhere did we find any evidence that seemed to bear upon the crime of which the place had been the scene. Indeed, Eastmead warned me beforehand that this would probably be the result. The one part of the hall which had escaped his notice on his first visit had been the secret staircase. The other articles which we had found, and which might possibly be of use against Flinter, had evidently been brought to the hall after our party had landed from the yacht, and consequently after Daisy's arrest.

When our tedious task was completed, we went to the dining-room, where we found Dr. Branksome awaiting us. Cold meat and wine were upon the table; and we were so thoroughly exhausted by our labors that we were glad to make a hurried meal before departing to catch the last train to York. I did not care to talk much to Branksome. He had heard of the discovery of the strychnia, but said wonderfully little about it. I thought, indeed, that for once something must have occurred to stay the flow of his brilliant conversation.

CHAPTER XV.

JAMES GREGSON'S STORY.

It was late at night when I got back to York, excited and elated by the great discovery I had made. A letter from Harding awaited me, in which he told of the steps

he was taking for the purpose of finding Gregson. Through the celebrated detective Max Bielski he believed that he might at last get on his track, though the chase would undoubtedly be a difficult one. I did not go to bed until I had answered the letter, and given Harding a full account of my visit to the hall. I concluded by imploring him to come to me at once, if that were possible, so that we might advise as to the next measures to be taken.

"A gentleman is waiting to see you, sir, downstairs." It was early the next morning, whilst I was at breakfast in my private room at the hotel, that I received this intimation.

"Do you know his name?"

"No, sir; he would not give me his name, but he said I was to tell you that he came from Mr. Harding."

"Show him up at once."

The stranger was a short man, with powerful frame, clean-shaven face, and bright eyes that seemed to see everything at once.

"Beg pardon, sir, for intruding," he said, addressing me with a business-like air; "I thought you might not wish to have my name spread over the house, for you see it is rather a well-known name now, sir; I am the detective Mr. Harding has been employing, on your account I believe."

"Mr. Bielski?"

"Yes, Max Bielski at your service, sir." He pulled a note-book out of his pocket and opening it continued: "I understand you want to meet with a party of the name of James Gregson, aged about thirty, tall and fair-haired. Well, Mr. Fenton, don't be offended, but I must

tell you at once that that description won't give me any help in finding the man. You see, sir, there are thousands of tall fair-haired men of thirty walking about the streets; and as for the name, you may be sure that Mr. Gregson is not Mr. Gregson now, if he has any reason to wish to keep in hiding. You will have to tell me something more."

"But I am afraid that is just what I cannot do."

"Well, we'll see, sir. You must excuse me putting you through your catechism, Mr. Fenton. It must be done if I'm to lay hold of your man."

And in a surprisingly short space of time Mr. Bielski had made himself the master of all the particulars, good, bad, and indifferent, which I knew about Gregson, including even the story Daisy had told me. When I told him of the photograph of Daisy I had picked up in the railway-carriage, after Gregson left it, he at once asked me for it; and—very reluctantly—for it was the only portrait of my darling which I possessed—I parted with it to him.

At the end of an interview of three quarters of an hour the detective pulled out his watch, and rising hastily said, "I must be off, sir. I've just time to catch the express back to town."

"But are you going to London to find Gregson? My own opinion is that you'll find him somewhere about here."

"That is my opinion also, sir; and no doubt if I had three months to spare I could lay a heavy wager that I should 'nab' him in this very city of York before the end of that time. But you see, sir, it is a matter of life and death; and a single day might make all the differ-

ence; so I must follow the safe clue you have given me and not the uncertain one."

"And what is the safe clue?"

"The time about which Gregson landed in England from Melbourne. That is all I have to go upon. I must track him down from that hour to the present. Good-day to you, sir." And in another instant he was hurrying off to catch the ten-o'clock express to town.

The remainder of that day I spent in consultation with our solicitor, and in awaiting the arrival of Harding. He came to York by an evening train, and pressed my hand affectionately when we met upon the railway-platform.

"What do you say, Harding; shall we apply to the Home Secretary at once on the strength of the discovery of the strychnia?"

"No, we must wait. Don't look disappointed, my dear fellow. As soon as I received your letter this morning, I hurried off to Belmore's chambers, and was fortunate enough to get five minutes of his precious time. Indeed, I believe he gave me fully fifteen minutes, if the truth must be told. I read your letter to him, and asked him his advice. 'I should like to consult Grange before I say anything,' was his answer."

"You mean the judge."

"Precisely. Our one hope, you know, is in the judge. It will rest with him in the end whether there is to be a pardon or not; and Belmore, who knows that all his sympathies are on our side, is anxious to take him along with us in every step."

Accustomed as I had been to see in a judge only the

awful being clothed in a mediæval costume, who dispensed life and death, liberty and slavery, from the judgment-seat, I could hardly realize the fact that such a man should be full of active human sympathy, even on behalf of a fellow-creature whom he had just doomed to the gallows. So it was, however.

"Well," continued Harding, "I had a note at four o'clock from Belmore to say that Grange was very much pleased to hear of this discovery, which would of course need to be properly authenticated; but that something further must be obtained—something if possible tending to break down the evidence as to motive—before any steps were taken at the Home Office. You see it is not a commutation of the sentence that we want—it is a free pardon."

"Yes," I answered, feeling depressed and disappointed, for I had thought that all our troubles were at an end now that we had discovered the strychnia, "I suppose we must go on, but I confess that I seem to be at the end of my resources."

"Now, my good fellow, you must not give up in despair. Let us wait until we have caught Gregson. Who knows what he can tell us?"

I sat in gloomy meditation. Four precious days had already passed. It is true that they had not been wasted; but Daisy still lay under her awful doom, which was hourly drawing nearer to her. A heavy sigh broke from my lips.

Harding, evidently anxious to divert my thoughts, asked me to tell him all the particulars of my visit to the hall, and I complied with his request.

Harding studied the book for nearly half an hour, often making jottings on a sheet of paper, and referring again and again to particular pages. He laid it down wearily at last.

"I can do nothing with it," he said. "It is evidently some very intricate form of cipher. Such things *are* to be read, however, and we must have this read. We cannot afford to lose any chance of hitting upon a clue."

"But whom can you get to read it?"

"We must think that over. Perhaps Bielski may be able to give us some assistance."

The next day was spent in a journey to Barton at the request of Eastmead. From Barton we went with Eastmead to Little Lorton for the purpose of seeing Smirke the chemist. That person immediately recognized the parcel found in the secret staircase at the hall as being that in which he had wrapped the strychnia sold to Daisy. But he was able to afford additional proof of the identity of the parcel. On removing the sealed outer wrapper he showed us an inner covering, on which the label was repeated, with the address, and in addition the date, "Oct. 7th," in the chemist's own handwriting. There was, therefore, no longer any doubt that so far as the mere possession of strychnia at the time of the murder was concerned the evidence given against Daisy at her trial had been absolutely neutralized. Affidavits describing the discovery and identification of the parcel were duly made on the same day by Smirke, Eastmead, and myself, before one of the Barton magistrates.

Two days passed without any further progress being made. It was a whole week since Daisy's condemna-

tion, and only two more remained to us in which to save her. My impatience was at fever height, and Harding had a hard task to keep me in any degree calm or self-possessed. I had not dared to seek another interview with my darling. Until the question of life and death was settled in one way or the other, I felt that to see her once more would only be to torture her uselessly, and to rob me of the little strength which I still had left. But through the chaplain of the jail I was in constant communication with her. Every day I wrote to her, and she knew that I was living for her sake and hers alone.

This first week, I say, had come to an end before we heard anything more of Bielski. It was Sunday evening, and I was sitting by myself, wearily seeking for some fresh clue which might hitherto have escaped my attention, when the detective was suddenly ushered into my room.

"Good-evening, Mr. Fenton. I'm afraid you think I have been a long time over my work; but it has been as stiff a job as I have had for some time. The fellow has done nothing but double and take fresh names. If it had not been for that photograph you lent to me, I should have been baffled at last."

"And you—have you found him?" I cried eagerly.

"Yes, sir, he's here at your service; but before I bring him in to see you I should like to give you a hint. I don't know whether you'll find him a willing witness or the reverse; but if the latter, just ask him if he remembers Smith and Sharp, of Gracechurch Street. *That* will fetch him soon enough, sir. You see he got into trouble there ten years ago, and has been wanted ever

since. I'll wait outside till you have had your talk with him."

He was leaving the room, when Harding, who had just heard of the detective's arrival, entered, and in a few words was informed of the situation.

"Let Bielski make himself useful whilst he is waiting," said Harding; "give him that memorandum-book."

I handed the little note-book to the detective. He looked at it gravely.

"I wonder if I can crack this nut! It's a hard one; but I'll try."

We withdrew, and in two minutes the door was opened, and Mr. James Gregson entered with the impudent smile upon his face which I knew so well. Bowing with an air of familiarity which was not without a distinct touch of insolence, he looked from me to Harding, as though inquiring the reason which had led us to take so much trouble to find him. Beneath this outward assumption of self-confidence I thought I could catch signs that the fellow was not quite so much at his ease as he wished to appear. I invited him to take a seat, and gravely stated to him the object I had in seeking him out.

He looked up at me with a satirical smile on his lips when I had finished my statement.

"So you think I can clear your friend Miss Stancliffe, do you?"

"I hope you can throw some light upon the mystery that surrounds Mr. Mauleverer's death."

He laughed outright. "Of course I can do that; but you have come to the wrong man for information

that will clear Miss Daisy. Have you forgotten what I told you in the railway-train when you were on your way to the old man's house?"

"It is precisely because I have not forgotten it that I have desired to see you again. You spoke then of a conspiracy to commit murder. I want you to be kind enough to tell me frankly what you meant by your words. You remember that you charged not only Miss Stancliffe, but Flinter and Dr. Branksome, and myself as well, with being in some plot. What did you mean by it?"

"Oh, don't be afraid on your own account, Mr. Fenton. I know now that *you* were not in the plot. You were only the dupe, and a very simple one too."

I was determined that, come what might, I should not lose my temper during this interview of such vital importance to my darling. The more I saw of the man the more certain I became that he did not speak without knowledge; and when I observed the growing gravity of Harding's face, I felt sure that he also entertained the same conviction. I took no notice, therefore, of Gregson's sneer, but repeated my question.

"Tell me, if you please, what was the nature of the plot of which you spoke?"

"Is it possible," he retorted, "that you are so dull as not to see the nature of the plot for yourself now? I should have given you credit for being not quite so stupid as you appear to me. Good Lord! The whole thing has been carried out under your nose, and now that it is finished you come to me to tell you what it means!"

"Pray take pity, then, on my stupidity, and tell me all!"

"Oh dear, no!" he said with a mocking laugh. "My secret is worth a good deal more to me than it can be to you."

"Is it money that you want for telling the truth? If so—"

"Yes, it is money; but I don't want any from you. You are a very clever fellow, I dare say, in your own opinion, and a very knowing one; but you must not think you can buy me."

"Well, kindly say what you are prepared to tell me without being bought."

"Just this, Mr.—Mr.—I declare I forget your name. What I told you would happen when I saw you in the train has all come true. Mauleverer has been murdered by the gang who have been plotting against his life for years, and who are now going to get clean off with the swag—all but one of them; and thanks to some stupid blundering on their part,—or perhaps I ought to say on your part, mister, for I'm told you have meddled a good bit in the business,—she'll be hanged. That's all."

The malice of the man revealed itself in the tones in which he spoke. I kept my temper, however, but I saw at the same time that the moment had arrived when I ought to use the weapon entrusted to me by the detective.

"Mr. Gregson," I said, "since that is the name by which you choose to call yourself, you are making a great mistake in supposing that I am quite so helpless as you imagine. I *have* the means of making you speak, and by Heaven, sir, I'll use them, and quickly too, or make you pay dearly for your silence."

He looked up at me with a startled air. The fellow

was a cur, and at the first straight blow he appeared to be more than half inclined to succumb. But he recovered himself after a momentary pause.

"I don't know what you are talking about. First of all you want to bribe me, and then you try bullying. I've not come here to be either bought or sold."

"Then, perhaps, as you don't want to be sold, you will tell me your story without compelling me to summon the detective who is waiting in the next room, in order that I may make a communication to him about yourself and Smith and Sharp, of Gracechurch Street."

The stroke told even more quickly and completely than I had dared to hope. A ghastly pallor overspread the fellow's face, and he sat for more than a minute speechless, staring at me with eyes full of terror.

"You don't mean to bring that up against me after all these years? Good God! how have you got to know anything about it?" After a pause he continued: "Well, I'll tell you as much as I can if you'll promise not to give me up."

"If you tell me everything, you will be quite safe so far as I am concerned. If you do not, then you must take the consequences."

All his assumed ease had vanished, and he sat before us now as abject a craven as I have ever seen. Bielski's secret had worked like magic. In a faltering voice the wretched creature asked if he might have "a drop of brandy" before he began his story, and I was by no means sorry to supply him with it. Then he began and unfolded the marvellous tale which I shall repeat in his own words, merely omitting his redundancies of speech.

“They have been plotting against Mauleverer ever since I’ve known him, and that is seven years. Whom do I mean by they? I mean Dr. Branksome and his gang; that is, Flinter and the girl Daisy, and a lot of fellows in Australia, and now they have got this Fosdyke into the business. You see it has been a regular company, and they have been working it for years. Talk of gold-mining; but there is no gold-mine in all Australia that will yield half so much as Mr. Mauleverer. So you need not wonder that the whole party—there are some of them still over there—have been working at the business for years past. At one time I know they meant to make an end of the old man in his own house at Wangoora. But you see some of them had got a bit blown upon there, and they were afraid that if anything happened it would not do; so then the doctor hit upon the plan of bringing him away to England, and getting rid of him quietly, at a time when the worst members of the gang were at the other side of the world.”

“But how could it profit Dr. Branksome to kill Mr. Mauleverer? He was not his heir.”

“No; that is just it. But the plot began a great deal sooner than you seem to suppose. It began nearly twenty years ago. At that time Mauleverer had no heir. His only sister had died childless, and there was neither kith nor kin to come after him.”

“His sister childless! Why, Miss Stancliffe had been born then.”

Just so; only in those days she was Miss Somebody else; Miss Stancliffe, as you call her, had not been thought of at that time.”

Harding uttered a low cry of amazement. I found it difficult to put the next question.

"What in Heaven's name do you mean?"

"I mean," he said doggedly, "that it was a plant from the very beginning! Dr. Branksome and his party were determined to get every farthing of the old man's money. He had no heir, and so they found one for him, and planted her on him successfully."

"But why should they have fixed upon Miss Stancliffe? What good did they imagine it would do them, supposing that he did leave everything to her?"

The sneering smile appeared on the fellow's face again.

"Really," he said, "you are not very bright. They must have found it easy to make a fool of you. Daisy was adopted by the doctor's wife when she was little more than a baby. She lived in the doctor's house for a dozen years or more, and Branksome got such an influence over her, that he knew he could twist her round his fingers, exactly as he pleased. Why, I bet you two to one that she has made her will in his favor since her arrest."

I could not command my countenance entirely when I heard this direct guess at the truth. It brought with it to my mind a terrible confirmation of the truthfulness of this unwilling witness.

"I see you know something about it," he continued. "Well, it is just as I thought it would be. They never meant the girl to share with them. She was to have all the kicks, whilst they got all the ha'pence. It would have been different, though, if she had listened to me."

"I don't want either to throw doubt upon your story

or to seem to accept it without further inquiry; but I must ask you to tell me who, in your belief, Miss Stancliffe is?"

"Did I not tell you just now? No. Well, she is the daughter, I am told, of a poor old parson named Sheldon, who died at Melbourne twenty years ago. His wife lived twelve or eighteen months after him, and then she died, too, and Daisy was left a little child, without a friend in the world. It was then, as I've said, that Mrs. Branksome took pity on her, and adopted her. She was a good woman was the doctor's wife, and he never dared to carry out his plot about Daisy until she was gone. God knows whether he did not help her off in the end. He was equal to it. At all events, as soon as she died, Branksome goes to poor old Mauleverer, and tells him the whole tale—the tale he had made up—how he had kept the secret of Daisy's real birth until then, partly because of his promise to her mother, and partly for his wife's sake, as she would never have parted with the girl. Mauleverer swallowed the bait whole, and from that time Branksome had complete command not only over Daisy, but over the old man also."

"How have you got to learn all this?"

"That's my business," he said in sullen tones. But immediately some swift fear of the consequences of giving me offence took possession of his mind. "If you must know, I learned it all from an old servant of Branksome's whom I got hold of. I always suspected there was something wrong, and after Branksome quarrelled with me, and got me dismissed by Mauleverer, I wormed the truth out of the old woman."

Harding and I were so much astounded by the extra-

ordinary revelation thus made to us, that neither of us felt capable of carrying Gregson's examination further. Strange as it may seem, we had no doubt as to the truth of his story. Rascal as the fellow unmistakably was, he had told his tale in a manner which compelled our acceptance of it. I sat bewildered, almost paralyzed, by the nature of his statements. Daisy not the niece of Mauleverer! And Branksome the head of a gang of scoundrels, whose diabolical plot against the life of the millionaire had only now been carried out, after years of careful preparation! It seemed incredible, and yet in my heart I felt certain that it was true.

Harding was the first to recover the full use of his faculties.

"Will you be good enough," he said, addressing Gregson, "to give us your opinion, if you have one, as to the way in which Mr. Mauleverer was murdered?"

"I thought you knew all about that. Daisy Stancliffe gave him the poison instead of his powder that night."

By a look Harding warned me to keep calm. "Do I understand," he pursued, "that, in your opinion, Miss Stancliffe—for so, I think, we may still call her—administered the poison knowingly?"

"Why, put it to your own sense, sir. Somebody gave the old gentleman his dose that night. It was not done by Branksome, or by Flinter, or by Fosdyke, nor by Mr. Fenton here. Who did it? Not any of the English servants at Great Lorton. There's none of them in the secret, I am sure. Don't you see that it *must* have been done by the girl who had been brought up for that very purpose—ever since she was a baby?"

"No!" I cried, regardless of Harding's appealing

glance, "I do *not* see it. God only knows how the thing was done, but if Miss Stancliffe was the accomplice of these villains, she was an unconscious and an innocent one."

"Then will *you* tell me how the thing was done? Why, you know yourself that neither Branksome nor Flinter had been near the hall for weeks before the old man died; and they were a thousand miles away *when* the dose was given."

I put my hands to my forehead wearily.

"Ah, if I *could* only tell you how it was done! I have thought, and thought, and thought over *everything* till my brain has grown giddy. There is only one theory that has even a chance in its favor, and of that, alas! if it be the true one, we can never obtain the proof."

"And what may that theory be?" asked Gregson, with an air of interest.

I hesitated as to whether to reveal my idea to him. It was one which had occurred to me more than once during the long sleepless watches of the night; but I had said nothing of it to any one, chiefly, I think, because it was but, and in the nature of things never could be anything more than, a theory. Unless a miracle were to happen, no proof of it, short of the confession of the criminals, could ever be adduced. Still, it might be well to hear Gregson's opinion of it.

"May it not have been possible," I said, "for a powder containing strychnia to have been secretly substituted by Flinter for one containing Mr. Mauleverer's proper medicine? In that case Flinter might be able to prove an *alibi*, although he was really the culprit; and Miss

Stancliffe may have given the poison to Mr. Mauleverer, although perfectly innocent of any knowledge of its nature."

I heard a low chuckle and looked up. Bielski had entered the room whilst I was speaking, and had heard my theory.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I knocked twice, but I could not make you hear me. You'll excuse me, Mr. Fenton, but I should like to tell you that you have got on the right track at last. As soon as Mr. Harding told me the facts, I saw the trick had been done in that way. But lor! What a pity Mr. Belmore didn't bring it out before the jury!"

"I hinted at it to him," I replied, "but he seemed to think it would only damage our case, as no proof could be tendered in support of it."

"True, that is the weak point; but you know, sir, I suppose, that murder has been done that way before? Aye, and an innocent man guillotined for the crime of which he knew nothing. I think, after all, Mr. Belmore was right not to suggest this whilst the mystery of the strychnia that the young lady had bought was unexplained. It would have been too far-fetched then. But things are different now, and the Home Secretary will have to think whether, after all, the evidence will justify him in refusing a reprieve. For my part, Mr. Fenton, I'll put my money on a respite."

Bielski looked round at Gregson, and evidently judged from the state of that gentleman's features that the screw had been applied to him not ineffectually.

"Got all you want out of this young gentleman?" he asked. "Enough for the present, eh? Well then,

my good fellow, take your hook into the next room, and wait there till I come to you. Don't trouble yourself about the door. It is locked, and I have the key in my own pocket."

The detective winked knowingly at the unlucky Gregson, and in this unceremonious manner dismissed him from our presence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECRET OF THE CIPHER.

"GENTLEMEN," said Bielski, when we were alone, "I think I have something to say that will surprise you." He held in his hand the little memorandum-book, the mysterious contents of which he had been studying whilst we had been engaged with Gregson.

"Have you discovered the cipher? Does it betray anything of the fellow's secrets?" I asked with eagerness.

"Yes, sir; I *have* found the clue to the cipher. Do you know what it is? It is an old-fashioned system of short-hand, with some new abbreviations and arbitrary signs. You see I had to learn short-hand for my own purposes, so I know all about it."

"And do you mean to say you know this system?"

"Oh dear no! We are going a little too fast, if you'll excuse me, sir. It may take weeks to unriddle this; for at the best of times it is not always easy to decipher short-hand. All the same, I hope we may pick the lock

in a shorter time than that. I have a friend in London who will help me."

"And is this the surprising news you have to tell us, Bielski?" interjected Harding.

"No, sir, no. It is something more than that. You gave me this book as Flinter's. But I find it is not his at all. It is written by 'Francis Branksome, M.D.' Here's his name upon the first page." He pointed to some hieroglyphics that to Harding and myself were quite unintelligible.

"And have you read that already?"

"Yes, that is quite easy to understand. It is written in a system that I know something of myself. What makes me most suspicious about this book is that the cipher has been altered in many ways, as the writer has gone on with his entries. It is tolerably clear and simple at first, but it becomes more difficult and complicated as we proceed. That shows that the man was determined to hide from everybody what he was writing. Why should Dr. Branksome be so anxious to do that?"

"We have heard something about Dr. Branksome this morning which may perhaps throw light upon that question," said Harding.

"From the young man outside there?"

"Yes;" and then I related to the detective the strange story which had been told by Gregson.

"By Jove! gentlemen," he cried, slapping his thigh in his exultation, "this is really magnificent. What a case I'll have when I get that in hand! It'll mean a trip to Australia for me, though; and I don't care so much about that."

"But what light will it throw on Miss Stancliffe's case? How will it assist her?"

"How will it assist her? I should say nothing could assist her more. It is the very evidence we have been wanting to weaken the motive for the murder. You must hand this young man over to me now, gentlemen. I must get that story of his down in ship-shape."

Bielski was quite excited over the prospect of the task, which he had apparently already allotted to himself, of unravelling the whole mystery of which Gregson professed to have given us the outlines. For my part, I cared little or nothing about that mystery in itself. All that I wanted was evidence which would deliver my darling, not only from a shameful death, but from that stain of criminality which the verdict of the jury had cast upon her. We had gone far, I felt, towards arriving at the truth; but nothing short of the complete exoneration of Daisy would satisfy me, and that, alas! was apparently still remote.

When the detective had taken Gregson off to his own hotel to cross-examine him at his leisure regarding the story he had told us, Harding and I sat together discussing all that had now come to light. Our chief feeling—or mine at any rate—was one of wonder at the fact that Dr. Branksome should be such a villain as Gregson represented.

Never, surely, was there a man in this world who looked less like a villain, who bore himself less like one, who seemed to all around him to be more completely above suspicion. I recalled all my dealings with him from that first day when we met in the Grand Hotel at Scarborough, and I could not remember a single in-

cident, a look or a tone of the voice, that had been calculated to awaken suspicion in my mind. He was always the same—cool, self-possessed, gentlemanly, frank in manner, brilliant in talk. He had never played the part of Joseph Surface and assumed the functions of a champion of morality; but I remembered no one whom I had met in the course of my life who had made a deeper impression upon me, or who had more completely won my confidence and regard. Even now I could hardly bring myself to believe that he was a villain—much less a villain of the cold, cruel, calculating type depicted by Gregson.

I remembered, however, that my first quarrel with him had arisen when he dropped to me a hint of his belief that Daisy was guilty. It was only then that, in my overpowering love for her, I had broken through the glamour which had hitherto invested him. I believe that even now, when I had heard Gregson's story, I should have rejected it with my whole heart if it had not been for Branksome's desertion of Daisy. That offence I had never forgiven; and the fact that he had been guilty of it enabled me at this moment, despite all my experience in my personal relations with him, to accept the apparently incredible story of his crime which I had received from the lips of Gregson. I saw too, quite clearly, the strong confirmation of that story which was to be found in the fact that he had acted just as Gregson had predicted that he would act. In the event of the sentence of the law being carried out upon Daisy, he would step into undisputed possession of Mauleverer's millions. Yes: I felt convinced, in spite of all my prepossessions, that I had indeed been, as Gregson had

declared, the veriest dupe throughout this business—but the dupe of a man whose villainy was such as to defy all ordinary sagacity.

Bielski, with his usual rapidity of movement, darted off that very night to London, haling the unfortunate Gregson along with him. It was on the following morning that I had my second interview with my darling.

I found her more altered than I had anticipated. The strain upon her mind had evidently been terrible during that week which she had passed in the grim solitude of the condemned cell, with nothing but a shameful death staring her in the face. How my heart overflowed with love and sympathy, when I saw her, pale and worn, standing upright in the gloomy cell, awaiting me with a pathetic smile upon her white lips! It was long, long before I could murmur even the first words of greeting.

And even then, when I had found my voice, and when I had answered some of the many questions she addressed to me, I labored under serious embarrassment. I dared not tell her how I had been engaged during those days which had passed since we met before. I had written to her immediately upon my return from the hall to let her know that the strychnia had been discovered, but I did not venture to speak of those other discoveries for which we were indebted to Gregson. And yet I could not leave her without some ray of hope to lighten her miserable cell. I am afraid that, ere I quitted her side, I had imparted to her a share of the agitation by which I myself was possessed. And yet I could not be sorry, when that brief interview of mingled

bliss and agony came to an end, to think that her dear face no longer wore that sad look of pathetic apathy and resignation which had distinguished it when we met.

It was on my return to the hotel that I found a telegram from Bielski. "*Cipher discovered. Most important.*" The detective evidently did not waste words in telegraphing. I was consumed with eagerness to learn what the important news might be to which we had now got the key.

"A gentleman to see you, sir." It was the evening of this same day, and I was sitting by myself in my room. The waiter held the door open, and Dr. Branksome, who must have adopted some special means thus to ensure his admission to my apartment, entered.

"Dr. Branksome!" I said, in astonishment. "You here!"

He smiled with the grave air that I knew so well, and, removing his glove, offered his hand to me. What was the magnetic influence which the man exercised over all who came in contact with him? I cannot tell. I only know that, whilst I cursed myself for my weakness, I did not refuse his outstretched hand.

He seated himself with great composure, and said:

"I must apologize for an untimely intrusion, but I think you will forgive me when you know the purpose of my visit. You have seen Daisy, I understand, to-day. I have not had that privilege myself. I want you to tell me how the poor child is."

Daisy's name acted as a spell to save me from the strange influence of the man.

"Yes," I replied, "I have seen Daisy, Dr. Branksome, but I can say nothing to you about her."

He arched his eyebrows in mute surprise. "I think you carry your resentment too far. I admire it; but it is unjust."

"Hypocrite!" I cried, my impetuous temper once more breaking down all self-erected barriers of prudence. "Hypocrite and liar, I know you now. Why do you come to me with your smiling face, and your simulated tenderness for the girl whom you have made your victim,—the girl whose very life you have been ready to sacrifice to your devilish plans? Go to somebody else, and smile, and smile, and play the villain with them. Don't come to me. I tell you, I know you."

"Mr. Fenton," he said, rising to his feet, "if grief has distempered your imagination, you ought at least to be able to put some check upon your tongue when you receive a gentleman who has come to you in a spirit of the purest friendship."

I laughed bitterly. "Friendship, purity!" I cried. "Don't I tell you, sir, that I have found you out—that I know now for what purpose this sweet girl whom you have made your unconscious tool, and whom you have now abandoned to a shameless death, was adopted by you, given a name to which she had no right, and palmed off upon a man with whom she had no relationship? I know it all, sir, and the meaning and end of it all. Everything has been done on a grand scale, I confess. Nobody thought that the magnificent Dr. Branksome was a vulgar scoundrel, plotting by day and night to obtain possession of Mauleverer's millions!"

"Ah! I see it all!" he replied, in tones in which there was veiled irony, that I found it very hard to bear. "I thought that it was grief for Daisy that had turned your

brain. I see now that you have been listening to the slanders of a convicted thief, a discharged servant, a would-be assassin, and that, influenced by his malignant fables, you are inclined to mourn rather Mr. Mauleverer's money than the fate of his niece. If that be so, Mr. Fenton, I must wish you good-evening. I can bear a great deal for Daisy's sake, but I decline to keep any terms with a man who really believes such slanders as those which Gregson has imparted to you."

He turned to go. A sudden thought struck me. I went forward and laid my hand upon his arm.

"Dr. Branksome," I said, trying to keep down the surging emotion which seemed to stifle my utterance, "I may have wronged you. I don't know. All I know is that you are a wonderful man, and that, in spite of the hideous crimes of which I cannot help feeling that you are guilty, I am drawn towards you in a way that I cannot explain, even to myself. Will you hear me when I cry to you for mercy for Daisy? See, I will grovel at your feet, if you will but promise to save her! Take all the accursed money that Mauleverer possessed, do with it what you will, but save her! As you hope for eternal happiness hereafter, as you dread the punishment which sooner or later falls upon every wrong-doer, be merciful, and let the poor child escape from the net that has been woven around her."

As I live, when I looked up into that handsome face, I saw tears in the man's eyes. My own were dim enough; but they were not mistaken in what they told me they saw. He grasped my hand with the warmth and firmness of a brother's greeting, and for once his measured tones were broken as he answered me.

"Fenton, you are an honest man! Forgive me if I used rough language just now. On my part I forgive you all your suspicions of me. You shall hear from me again, and perhaps then you will not think so hardly of me as you do at present."

His hand was on the door when he turned and said: "I think my memory is failing. I had clean forgotten one of the objects of my coming to see you. It was to ask whether, on the occasion of your visit to Great Lorton, you by any chance took away with you a small pocket-book belonging to me—a little diary in which I make memoranda, in short-hand, of things which happen to interest me, but which are of no importance to anybody else."

If he had put this question to me two minutes before, I should openly have exulted over him. As it was, so great was the power which this extraordinary man was able to wield over those around him, that I answered him now in a manner that might almost have led a by-stander to imagine that I regretted the fact which I had to communicate to him.

"Yes," I said gravely. "I took possession of the book you mention. I did not know that it was yours; I imagined that it belonged to Flinter. It is not in my possession now. Bielski, the detective whom I employed to discover Gregson, took it to London with him yesterday, and I received this message from him to-day."

I handed to Branksome the telegram which announced that the secret of the cipher had been discovered. He glanced at it, and as he did so I fancied that a slight pallor passed over his face. But he returned the paper

to me with a steady hand, and it was in a voice which showed no traces even of the emotion he had displayed when he responded to my appeal on behalf of Daisy that he said :

“It is curious that they should think they have discovered my cipher. The very fact that they talk of the contents of the book as important, tells me that they are utterly wrong. But I must not detain you longer, Mr. Fenton. I promise you that you shall hear from me within the next twenty-four hours.”

In another moment he had silently quitted the room.

The “newspaper train,” as it is called, reaches York from London shortly before ten in the morning. It brought with it Bielski, who had telegraphed to apprise me of his coming, and whom I accordingly awaited on the platform. The detective looked somewhat haggard and excited when he greeted me.

“Mr. Harding here?” he said. “I am glad of it. I want you both. I have something very important to lay before you.”

We hurried to my room, where Harding awaited us. Breakfast was on the table; but Bielski seemed little disposed to eat or drink until he had made his great communication to us. The instant the waiter had left the room he addressed us.

“Gentlemen, it is all right. The young lady is as innocent as a dove, and in forty-eight hours she’ll be as free as we are. You were right, Mr. Fenton, in your guess at the way it was done; and now I can prove it.”

What was it that made the little detective, with his shrewd keen face, stop suddenly in the middle of what was evidently meant to be a long harangue? It was

simply the sudden springing to his feet of Harding, whose hands the next moment held mine, and were violently shaking them, whilst with a voice curiously unlike his usual one, he gasped out, "Old fellow—so glad—God bless you!"

And I? But I shall not weary the reader with any analysis of my emotions. It was a dark December morning; ah, how unlike that bright summer weather in which Daisy and I had first met and learned to love each other! But when these words fell from the detective's lips, the summer sun shone out again, and the birds sang in my heart, and the very heavens seemed to be opened above me.

"I don't wonder at your being upset, gentlemen. I feel a bit queer myself; but you must really compose yourselves, and listen to what I have to tell you. I never had such a story to tell before. Lor bless me! I'll never believe in clever men again. Every one of them is alike. They play their game so beautifully that you think there can be no catching 'em; and then, lo and behold! you find that all the time they have been playing your game too, and in the way that you least of all expected."

Having delivered himself of this exordium, Bielski took from his pocket a small parcel, from which he duly extracted the little memorandum-book I had found at Great Lorton Hall.

"This book, gentlemen, is neither more nor less than the diary of Francis Branksome, Esquire, M.D., for nearly the whole of the present year. And in it Dr. Branksome has set down, all as plain as a pikestaff, the whole history of his own proceedings during that time,

and of the crimes which he has committed, including the murder of Mr. Mauleverer, and the plan by which the suspicion of that murder was to be thrown upon Miss Stancliffe."

A cry of horror broke from the lips of Harding. For my part, I sat spellbound and silent.

"I never saw anything in my life before to compare with this, gentlemen," continued the detective, shaking his head emphatically. "I have seen a many queer things in my time; but never anything like this. Here's a clever man, an educated man, a man who thinks that he can take in everybody around him, and that we are all nothing more than chessmen to be moved about by him at his pleasure—aye, and a man who does move people about just as he pleases for year after year; and yet this clever man is such a fool that he thinks he can put his secrets into writing, and prevent anybody discovering 'em, simply because he mixes up two systems of short-hand, and makes one of his own out of 'em, in which to keep his diary." Bielski looked round as though to ask our opinion on the subject.

"I remember," said Harding, "a case of a murderer in Paris who was convicted through a diary in which he left a record of all his crimes."

"Do you indeed, sir? Well, all I can say is that it is the first time I've come across such a case. But now, gentlemen, I must tell you what the diary says. It took me and my mate all day yesterday, and down to three o'clock this morning, to translate it; and we shouldn't have got done with it yet, if it hadn't been that luckily this clever Dr. Branksome had chosen for his cipher two systems, both of which my friend happened to know."

Thereupon Bielski produced a large batch of manuscript, and began to turn over the pages, most of which I saw were covered with his handwriting.

“My friend deciphered, and I wrote down as he read it,” he explained to us. “I am not going to trouble you with the early part of the story, though there is plenty that I shall have to deal with afterwards. I’ll keep straight to what concerns this case. Here is the first extract, after he has seen *you*, Mr. Fenton: ‘Arrived Scarborough 6 A.M. Went ashore at 8, and joined the boss and Daisy at Grand Hotel. The old man very well; appears to have got over the attack of bronchitis. Looks as if he might live twenty years yet. Had the usual business talk with him, and settled everything satisfactorily. No suspicion of Fosdyke’s game.’ Fosdyke’s game,” said the detective, breaking off suddenly, “was to transfer an immense number of Mauleverer’s bonds into portable and transferable securities. The rogues were determined, whether the man lived or died, to dip their hands into his pockets. ‘Found to my disgust that Daisy has made the acquaintance of a young man named Fenton. I suspected something from her manner of speaking of him. It seems that he protected her from that brute Gregson at York railway-station, and she repays him by falling in love with him. I made an opportunity of observing them both closely. There is no doubt that he is fond of her; and I find that he has got an influence over her which I must destroy as speedily as possible. A commonplace, inoffensive young man; but in my way, and therefore to be got out of it.’”

This extract affords a fair sample of the perfect frankness with which Branksome had committed his thoughts

to paper. There was not the faintest attempt in the diary at self-deception. If he told a lie, he said so straight out; if he committed any crime, trivial or great, it was described with cynical plainness of speech. If the whole of that extraordinary volume were to be published, it would be one of the most interesting psychological revelations ever given to the world.

But it must suffice for my purpose here to give but a brief series of extracts from the diary. The entry referring to my visit to the hall was as follows:

"Sept. 20. This morning I procured from London my old medicine-chest. Found a good supply of strychnia. Ascertained that the boss had got a new box of pills from Carrick yesterday. Have been busy experimenting all the morning, making up powders in imitation of Carrick's. Fenton came on visit just before dinner-hour—more desperately in love than ever. After dinner he and Daisy went into the garden together, and I set Flinter to watch them. He was the witness of a very pretty love-scene—Daisy and her young gentleman billing and cooing in the most approved style. When I got the boss away from his guest at night, I told him the whole story in my own fashion, and let him know that I had ascertained quite enough to prove that Fenton was a scamp, probably in league with Gregson. I had a little difficulty with him at first. He seemed to have taken rather a liking to the lad. But when I told him that he had been speaking contemptuously of him (Mauleverer) to Daisy, and speculating upon the chance of his dying soon, and leaving them in possession of his wealth, his temper changed, and he became furiously angry, and told me that Fenton must be got out of the

house immediately after breakfast to-morrow morning. Flinter, I find, has grave suspicions that Fenton knows something, and insists upon his being removed from the spot at the moment the grand *coup* is struck."

Then came other entries describing my departure from the hall, and the way in which Branksome succeeded in inflaming the mind of the doomed Mauleverer against both me and Daisy. Finally came the story of the execution of the vile plot itself.

"Oct. 7. Daisy was sent off to Little Lorton with strict orders to procure enough strychnia to poison all the rats in the hall. Brought back a big parcel of the stuff, and seemed quite frightened at having it in her possession. Am keeping up the estrangement between her and the boss. Went into the latter's room to-night after he had gone to bed, and suggested that he did not look well. Proposed he should have one of his powders. He assented to this, and I duly administered it to him. On taking the powder from the box in the dressing-room, I slipped in my own powder of strychnia. I saw that the powders were taken in regular order, so placed mine near the bottom of the box. It will come due, I calculate, in a fortnight.

"Oct. 8. Left hall this morning for Scarborough and the yacht. Fosdyke went with me, having evaded the old man's request that he would complete his new will at once. Query: *That* will is not very likely to be executed now, is it? Took an affectionate leave of the old gentleman, and felt really sorry to think I should see him no more. On getting to Scarborough, found it was a stormy day. Flinter had carried out my orders about

Fenton, and the latter was safe on board in the yacht's 'kitty.' ”

This particular book ended at this point. There were no further entries after that relating to my abduction.

“Now, gentlemen, you see it all,” said Bielski, when he had finished the reading. “We have to do with the greatest scoundrel the Lord ever sent upon this earth. But we have got him tight.” He pulled out his watch. “By this time, Mr. Fenton, our friend Dr. Francis Branksome ought to be safe in the hands of the Scotland Yard detective whom I brought down from London, but whom I did not think it absolutely necessary to introduce to you in the station two hours ago.”

“You have got a warrant against him?”

“Of course we have. When we had found as much as was necessary out of this book, I rushed off to Scotland Yard, and left that part of the business in their hands. It will be all right provided Branksome has not got a hint.”

“I am afraid he has got a hint,” I said, feeling more than a little guilty.

“Eh, what do you say, Mr. Fenton?” cried the detective, wheeling round upon me and eying me sharply.

I told him the whole story of Branksome's visit to me, and of how he had even seen the telegram which Bielski himself had dispatched. Bitterly did I now upbraid myself for my folly. I saw how the villain, by that momentary assumption of emotion, had once more overmatched me, and had won from me the secret he came to learn.

The detective wasted no time in any reproaches. He

snatched up his hat and rushed from the room. When he was gone, Harding and I discussed the possible results of Branksome's escape. Anxious as we were that he should be brought to justice, our chief thought was for Daisy: and we cared little what became of the villain now that her life and honor were secure.

In little more than half an hour poor Bielski returned, with chagrin written in unmistakable characters upon his face.

"Just what I expected," he cried; "the rogue has been too sharp for us, after all; but, thank God, he has not gone until the young lady has been as good as cleared."

He threw a telegram upon the table. It was from the Chief Constable at Scarborough, in answer to one from Bielski, announcing that the Golden Hawk had sailed that morning, destination unknown, carrying with her Dr. Branksome and Benjamin Flinter.

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. BRANKSOME'S LAST.

EARLY on the day following that on which Bielski had informed us of his extraordinary discovery, my good friend Harding found himself at Whitehall, in the room of the Permanent Under Secretary of the Home Department. Belmore was with him, and they had already drawn up a brief statement of the facts which had been discovered with regard to the murder of Mr. Mauleverer.

and the actual position of Daisy. One by one Mr. Belmore placed these facts before the great official, and showed, not merely how the strong evidence which had been brought against my darling at the trial had been neutralized by subsequent discoveries, but how there was now positive testimony—testimony of an extraordinary kind indeed, but still testimony which was conclusive—with regard to the actual criminal and his real accomplices, for whose arrest warrants had been issued.

The Under Secretary listened with patience and attention, and then, armed with the documents which they handed to him, he went to the apartment of the Secretary of State. A few minutes later they stood in the presence of the minister himself.

“I have been deeply interested in this case, Mr. Belmore, and very much troubled by it. It was so difficult to believe that a young girl could have been guilty of a crime of this sort. And yet the evidence was apparently complete, and unfortunately I have too much reason to know that we can never trust absolutely to antecedent improbabilities in cases of this kind.”

“But now, sir, I think you will admit that the evidence is clear so far as it goes, and that it establishes the innocence of this young lady.”

“I must see the judge first in the matter,” replied the Minister, cautiously.

“And may I venture to ask,” interposed Harding, “that you will act as soon as you possibly can, sir? I need not point out to you the cruel position of this young lady at the present moment, or of those to whom she is dear.”

“My dear sir, I shall act at once; in such a case delay

would be inexcusable. But you must forgive me if I withhold my own opinion until I have ascertained that of the judge."

Half an hour later I received the telegram for which I was waiting with breathless impatience at York. Alas! it did not announce, as I had hoped might be the case, the immediate discharge of my darling. Patience! patience!

But at nightfall the glad news came. "Secretary of State will advise Queen to grant free pardon. Formalities can be completed to-morrow."

And the next day I was at the Castle by daybreak, waiting to be admitted to the Governor's room. I was too soon, of course. Even when officialism acts with unwonted speed, it cannot outstrip the impatience of a lover. It was now the 18th of December. In a week longer Christmas would be with us. Twelve days had elapsed since I had heard the shameful doom pronounced upon my beautiful darling—the woman whom I had chosen out of all the world as worthiest and best, aye, and who had chosen me, all unworthy as I was, to keep that tender heart of hers—the purest and the truest that ever beat in a human bosom.

Only twelve days since that awful scene when Daisy and I had seemed to stand together within the very jaws of death! I could not believe it. Half of my entire life appeared to have been expended in the varied emotions through which I had passed since then. The officials of the prison were long, long in coming. I walked to and fro impatiently. I declare this waiting now was harder even than had been that waiting for the verdict, when my darling's fate hung in the balance. I recalled

all the history of those eventful four months which had passed since I first saw her in her peerless beauty, and the full flush of health and strength, in the railway-station of this very city; and whilst I rejoiced more than ever at the blessing which had been bestowed upon me in her love, my heart cried out to Heaven for pardon for all those errors which in my recklessness and blindness I had committed, and from which she had suffered. Ah, if it could but have come over again, how differently I should have acted, and with what loving care I should have shielded her even against that infernal network of lies which had been woven so cunningly about her! So I thought, as I looked back upon it all; and so, possibly, it might have been if that strange drama could have been re-enacted. But who can tell? Even now, when I fully recognize the blunders of which I was guilty, the folly, the blindness, the stubbornness I displayed in my dealings with Mauleverer and his friends, I sometimes ask myself whether my blunders may not have been more useful than my prudence would have been.

But what is that sound? The door opens, and I turn to greet the Governor with the longed-for news. No; the Governor is not there. It is my darling herself who stands before me, pale as a statue of marble, worn and wasted by the strain of an agony which might have brought even a strong man to the grave, but with all the light of life and love shining upon me from her star-like eyes.

We were at Scarborough two days later, staying once more in the Grand Hotel. The great house was practically empty now, and Daisy and Mrs. Cawthorne might

if they pleased have had their choice of any of the rooms in the building. I had induced Harding to come with us to the place where I had first met him. It was not merely that I needed to consult him on a hundred matters that concerned the interests both of Daisy and myself. In that fierce ordeal through which my darling and I had passed I had learned to love this true and tried friend as I had loved few men before.

It was on this second day of our stay in the hotel that I received the following letter from the arch-villain who had so nearly by his crimes marred the lives of both Daisy and myself. The letter had been posted at Scarborough on the very day on which the Golden Hawk sailed for its unknown port. But, strange to say, it had been directed to me, not at York, where the doctor knew that I was staying, but at Great Lorton Hall; from which place it had reached me, after some delay, at Scarborough.

“GOLDEN HAWK, off Scarborough, Dec. 16.

“DEAR MR. FENTON: I promised to let you hear from me within twenty-four hours, and I mean to prove myself a man of my word. I said that when you did hear of me again I should probably cause you to think less hardly of me, and I still trust that it may be so.

“You are a young man who is not wholly lacking in discrimination, though in your impulsiveness you make some very great mistakes. You are probably now cursing what you may regard as the blunder you made last night when you revealed to me the telegram from that detective with the foreign name on the subject of my diary. Pray console yourself. Even from your—and

Daisy's—point of view, you did not blunder there, as I shall soon prove to you.

“Every man, great or small, has some weakness. Mine has been a very simple one. I have had no confederate all through my life; even Flinter, and one or two more in Australia who have been permitted to understand something of my schemes, have never really been in my confidence. I am a sociable being, as you know. I could confide in nobody else; I made a confidant of myself. Don't suppose that I did not know there was a risk in doing it, even with the cipher I had adopted. I was well aware of that fact. But there must be an element of risk in all things human, and the chances were certainly a thousand to one against any harm happening to me through the indulgence of this little foible. Now of course all your petty moralists, from your detective upwards, will preach their little sermon about the blindness with which Providence afflicts all criminals, and will prove entirely to their own satisfaction that, if I am a great villain, I am a still greater fool. I deny it. I am no fool; and even after the lesson I have now had, I should not hesitate once more to repeat—of course under different conditions—the indiscretion which has cost me so dear now.

“My dear sir, let me remove any difficulty that may now lie in your way. If I had not heard from you of the discovery of my cipher, and if, instead of writing this letter comfortably to you on board our beautiful yacht, I had been in jail just now on the charge of murder, I should have been compelled in self-defence to put you and all your friends to an amount of trouble that I think would have far outweighed the object you were

seeking to attain. Moreover, I should in all probability have baffled the whole of you. But your appeal to me last night, coupled with the fact that I shall certainly not now be permitted to gather the fruit for which I have waited so long, has caused me to come to a conclusion of which I think you ought to hear with gratitude. I do not mean to fight. I am leaving you forever; but I shall do what I can in departing to smooth your way, and to leave you and Daisy to think not unkindly of me.

“I acknowledge, therefore, in the most formal manner, that the story set forth in my diary is literally true. I murdered Mr. Mauleverer in the manner therein described—by substituting a powder of strychnia for one of bromide of potassium. I had no accomplice in my crime save Benjamin Flinter. Daisy is absolutely innocent; and, though Fosdyke may have had his suspicions, he knew nothing. Fosdyke, my dear Mr. Fenton, is a very commonplace sort of rogue. I shall do nothing so absurd as to attempt to justify or palliate my conduct to you. I have my own justification, and I assure you it is altogether satisfactory to myself. My digestion is excellent; I sleep perfectly; and I know no more of a reproaching conscience than of a disordered stomach.

“There is one point on which, by the way, I should not like either you or Daisy to lie under any misapprehension. Though it was necessary, in case of need, to place Daisy under suspicion of being the real murderer of Mr. Mauleverer, there was not the slightest intention of putting her life in jeopardy. That was *your* doing, my dear Mr. Fenton; and you remember the hot indignation which Flinter—who always had a sneaking kindness for the dear girl—showed when he heard of what

I must say was your inexcusable rashness at Trondhjem. We wanted to create evidence against her, not that we might fling her into the dock to take her chance before a jury, but in order that we might have some means of counteracting the influence which unfortunately you seemed to have obtained over her, and of keeping both her and you in our power. But then, 'the best-laid schemes,' etc. I am no mouse, however, even though on this occasion my plans have 'gone agley.'

"Daisy is the daughter of a gentleman, a man of birth, refinement, and education, a clergyman of the Church of England, who died at Melbourne in 18—. I know nothing of her family history, save that her name is Sheldon; but you may depend upon it that she is, in every sense of the word, a lady.

"And now, nothing remains but that I should say, 'Bless you, my children,' and let the curtain be rung down upon the play! You will have Mauleverer's Millions upon which to enjoy yourselves—minus the comparatively trivial sum which my necessities have compelled me to appropriate; you will have youth, beauty, good conscience, etc., etc. Really, my dear Fenton, I envy you. Pray, when you are happy, bear in mind the fact that you owe your wife to me.

"And now, farewell! This is the last time you will ever hear of your sincere but *unrepentant*

"FRANCIS BRANKSOME."

This extraordinary letter, which left the man's character almost as much of an enigma to me as it had ever been, did something to clear away any remaining mystery connected with the tragedy; and it confirmed my

darling in the intention which she had formed that under no circumstances would she touch the money of the man who had taken her as his child, and loved and benefited her, under the influence of the fraudulent delusion impressed upon him by Branksome. Legally, she was full mistress of all Mauleverer's wealth—the amount of which we soon found had been greatly exaggerated. She made use of her powers over it to transfer the whole sum to trustees for the execution of the purposes which Mauleverer had named in the will he never signed.

And so, though I married the heiress of the millionaire, I got a penniless bride. But, strange to say, I have never regretted that fact; nor, I verily believe, would Daisy herself exchange her present lot for that which she enjoyed when men crowded round her eager to pay court to her as the inheritor of the rich man's wealth. The brightness of our honeymoon, which came very soon after those tragic days of which I have written in these pages, has never quite died out. Nay, it renews itself from year to year; and we are fain to acknowledge that we are the happier now because of the sorrows through which we have passed together.

Mr. Fosdyke, the clever attorney, had been too clever, for once. He knew nothing of the plot to murder Mauleverer—of that the authorities were fully satisfied; but he had forgotten certain elementary rules of his own profession in his dealings with the rich man's property, and so one day he was struck off the rolls, and consigned for the remainder of his life to poverty and ignominy.

What became of Dr. Branksome and his accomplice, Flintner, is a secret which time has never revealed. The last word that ever reached me from them was the letter

which the reader has now before him ; the last that was ever seen of them was on that gray December morning when the Golden Hawk slipped out of Scarborough Bay like a shadow, never more to come within mortal ken. Various are the rumors that I have heard regarding this arch-villain whose dupe I was along with so many others. Some spoke of him as leading a life of sybaritic self-indulgence in an isle of the Ægean ; others described him as being a prominent leader in a revolution in the newest of the Central American republics ; whilst there was one story—to which I myself attached more weight than I did to the rest—which spoke of the sinking of a large schooner yacht, name unknown, in the English Channel, by a homeward-bound P. & O. steamer, during a dense fog, some four-and-twenty hours after the Golden Hawk left Scarborough. That a yacht was lost, with all hands, at that time, and that the Golden Hawk has never more been heard of, are facts admitted by everybody. But whether it was the vessel which carried the sin-laden soul of Francis Branksome that went down so suddenly in the cold waters of the Channel, is one of those mysteries which will never be revealed until the sea gives up her dead.

THE END.

BEN-HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST.

By LEW. WALLACE. New Edition. pp. 552. 16mo, Cloth,
\$1 50.

Anything so startling, new, and distinctive as the leading feature of this romance does not often appear in works of fiction. . . . Some of Mr. Wallace's writing is remarkable for its pathetic eloquence. The scenes described in the New Testament are rewritten with the power and skill of an accomplished master of style.—*N. Y. Times*.

Its real basis is a description of the life of the Jews and Romans at the beginning of the Christian era, and this is both forcible and brilliant. . . . We are carried through a surprising variety of scenes; we witness a sea-fight, a chariot-race, the internal economy of a Roman galley, domestic interiors at Antioch, at Jerusalem, and among the tribes of the desert; palaces, prisons, the haunts of dissipated Roman youth, the houses of pious families of Israel. There is plenty of exciting incident; everything is animated, vivid, and glowing.—*N. Y. Tribune*.

From the opening of the volume to the very close the reader's interest will be kept at the highest pitch, and the novel will be pronounced by all one of the greatest novels of the day.—*Boston Post*.

It is full of poetic beauty, as though born of an Eastern sage, and there is sufficient of Oriental customs, geography, nomenclature, etc., to greatly strengthen the semblance.—*Boston Commonwealth*.


"Ben-Hur" is interesting, and its characterization is fine and strong. Meanwhile it evinces careful study of the period in which the scene is laid, and will help those who read it with reasonable attention to realize the nature and conditions of Hebrew life in Jerusalem and Roman life at Antioch at the time of our Saviour's advent.—*Examiner*, N. Y.

It is really Scripture history of Christ's time clothed gracefully and delicately in the flowing and loose drapery of modern fiction. . . . Few late works of fiction excel it in genuine ability and interest.—*N. Y. Graphic*.

One of the most remarkable and delightful books. It is as real and warm as life itself, and as attractive as the grandest and most heroic chapters of history.—*Indianapolis Journal*.

The book is one of unquestionable power, and will be read with unwonted interest by many readers who are weary of the conventional novel and romance.—*Boston Journal*.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

 The above work sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States or Canada, on receipt of the price.

J. S. WINTER'S NOVELS.

MIGNON; OR, BOOTLES'S BABY. Illustrated. 16mo, Paper, 25 cents.

A charming little story of military life.—*N. Y. Sun.*

A bright and taking little story, well worth reading.—*The Critic*, N. Y.

It is full of bright pictures, and the text is bright and deliciously funny.—*Commercial Bulletin*, Boston.

It is finely told, with humor and pathos, and excels in quick character drawing and style. It moves the better feelings.—*Boston Globe.*

It is a light story of garrison life, with enough of a mystery to make it interesting to the end, and with a touch of pathos which is excellently done.—*Boston Courier.*

It is just the kind of book to help one to pass a summer afternoon pleasantly. The story treats of English regimental life, and relates the adventures of a stray baby, unceremoniously presented to one of the characters, in a striking and amusing manner.—*Boston Commonwealth.*

This is a pretty little story of barrack life, having for its central figure a precocious little sprite, who dances about a manly soldier of the best sort. The story is well told.—*Providence Telegram.*

HOUP-LA. Illustrated. 16mo, Paper, 25 cents.

It is a pathetic story and abounds in incident.—*N. Y. Sun.*

The tale has much of humor, much of pathos, and will occupy an hour very pleasantly.—*Troy Telegram.*

A story of adventure, exciting situations, strange scenes, odd characters, and of absorbing interest.—*Albany Press.*

A pretty story, full of human interest. It is nicely told, and holds the reader from the beginning to the close.—*Philadelphia North American.*

A touching story of a waif rescued from a cruel master by an English army officer.—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

A very amusing and, in its close, pathetic story of humble constancy and heroism.—*Zion's Herald*, Boston.

IN QUARTERS WITH THE 25TH (THE BLACK HORSE) DRAGOONS. 16mo, Paper, 25 cents.


Its jollity and fun are exemplified by practical jokes and deliberate waggishness, and at the same time there are not wanting bits of pathos and genuine heroism. The narrative is unflinching and at times very dramatic.—*N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.*

Briskly narrated in a dashing manner, and well fitted to engage an idle half-hour.—*Boston Herald.*

Well worth reading. . . . Written in a lively and forcible style, and is one of the books which it is a pleasure to pick up when one wishes entertaining reading matter for a short time. Besides, being more or less stories of adventure, and the same characters occurring in more than one of them, the interest continues until the book is finished.—*Boston Times.*

A MAN OF HONOR. 16mo, Paper, 25 cents.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

 HARPER & BROTHERS will send any of the above works by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States or Canada, on receipt of the price.

It surpasses all its predecessors.—N. Y. TRIBUNE.

STORMONTH'S ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

A Dictionary of the English Language, Pronouncing, Etymological, and Explanatory, Embracing Scientific and Other Terms, Numerous Familiar Terms, and a Copious Selection of Old English Words. By the Rev. JAMES STORMONTH. The Pronunciation Carefully Revised by the Rev. P. H. PHELP, M.A. pp. 1248. 4to, Cloth, \$6 00; Half Roan, \$7 00; Sheep, \$7 50.

Also in HARPER'S FRANKLIN SQUARE LIBRARY, in Twenty-three Parts. 4to, Paper, 25 cents each Part. Muslin covers for binding supplied by the publishers on receipt of 50 cents.

As regards thoroughness of etymological research and breadth of modern inclusion, Stormonth's new dictionary surpasses all its predecessors. * * * In fact, Stormonth's Dictionary possesses merits so many and conspicuous that it can hardly fail to establish itself as a standard and a favorite.—*N. Y. Tribune*.

This may serve in great measure the purposes of an English cyclopædia. It gives lucid and succinct definitions of the technical terms in science and art, in law and medicine. We have the explanation of words and phrases that puzzle most people, showing wonderfully comprehensive and out-of-the-way research. We need only add that the Dictionary appears in all its departments to have been brought down to meet the latest demands of the day, and that it is admirably printed.—*Times*, London.

A most valuable addition to the library of the scholar and of the general reader. It can have for the present no possible rival.—*Boston Post*.

It has the bones and sinews of the grand dictionary of the future. * * * An invaluable library book.—*Ecclesiastical Gazette*, London.

A work which is certainly without a rival, all things considered, among the dictionaries of our language. The peculiarity of the work is that it is equally well adapted to the uses of the man of business, who demands compactness and ease of reference, and to those of the most exigent scholar.—*N. Y. Commercial Advertiser*.

As compared with our standard dictionaries, it is better in type, richer in its vocabulary, and happier in arrangement. Its system of grouping is admirable. * * * He who possesses this dictionary will enjoy and use it, and its bulk is not so great as to make use of it a terror.—*Christian Advocate*, N. Y.

A well-planned and carefully executed work, which has decided merits of its own, and for which there is a place not filled by any of its rivals.—*N. Y. Sun*.

A work of sterling value. It has received from all quarters the highest commendation.—*Lutheran Observer*, Philadelphia.


A trustworthy, truly scholarly dictionary of our English language.—*Christian Intelligencer*, N. Y.

The issue of Stormonth's great English dictionary is meeting with a hearty welcome everywhere.—*Boston Transcript*.

A critical and accurate dictionary, the embodiment of good scholarship and the result of modern researches. Compression and clearness are its external evidences, and it offers a favorable comparison with the best dictionaries in use, while it holds an unrivalled place in bringing forth the result of modern philological criticism.—*Boston Journal*.

Full, complete, and accurate, including all the latest words, and giving all their derivatives and correlatives. The definitions are short, but plain, the method of making pronunciation very simple, and the arrangement such as to give the best results in the smallest space.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

 HARPER & BROTHERS will send the above work by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States or Canada, on receipt of the price.

HARPER'S WEEKLY FOR 1886.

On the 2d of January, 1886, HARPER'S WEEKLY entered upon the thirtieth year of its existence. The series of its volumes justifies its title as "A Journal of Civilization" by reflecting, with steadily increasing fulness and accuracy, the progress of civilization throughout the period which these volumes cover, and by embodying as well as by recording the continuous advance of American literature and American art.

In Politics, HARPER'S WEEKLY will continue to represent the principles of the Republican party, and of the Republican party organization in so far as that organization is the faithful exponent of those principles. Holding aloof from factional entanglements, it will attempt to give voice to the best and wisest sentiment of the whole country. It has borne an efficient part in the work of establishing the Reform of the Civil Service on such a basis that the early and complete triumph of the reform is no longer doubted, nor by any party openly opposed.

In Literature, HARPER'S WEEKLY for 1886 will be signalized by the publication of two important and striking serials. One of these is by Mr. THOMAS HARDY, whose position among the foremost of living writers of fiction is unchallenged; the other by Mr. WALTER BESANT, one of the most rapidly rising of English novelists. Short stories by popular writers will continue to be features of the paper, which will also contain from time to time important articles on special subjects by acknowledged authorities.

In Art, it will be the aim of the publishers of the WEEKLY to continue, and if possible to increase, the rate of progress heretofore maintained in its illustrations. Within the past year its pages have contained, in the illustration of such events as the inauguration of President CLEVELAND, the death and national funeral of General GRANT, the dedication of Niagara Falls to the public, and the series of international yacht races, pictures which it is safe to say had not been approached in fidelity or in artistic excellence by any work previously done in this country in the department of illustrated journalism. With regard to foreign events, the exclusive arrangements of the publishers with some of the leading illustrated journals of Europe furnish a guarantee that its readers will have the earliest and best representations attainable of all occurrences abroad that are of interest to Americans.

As a family journal, the care that has been successfully exercised in the past to make HARPER'S WEEKLY a safe, as well as a welcome, visitor to every household will not be relaxed in the future. The ultimate influence of the subjects treated in its text and in its illustrations is not less considered than their immediate public interest. It is conducted in the belief that such scenes as would be repulsive or brutalizing to persons witnessing them cannot form fit subjects for literary or pictorial representation.

HARPER'S PERIODICALS.

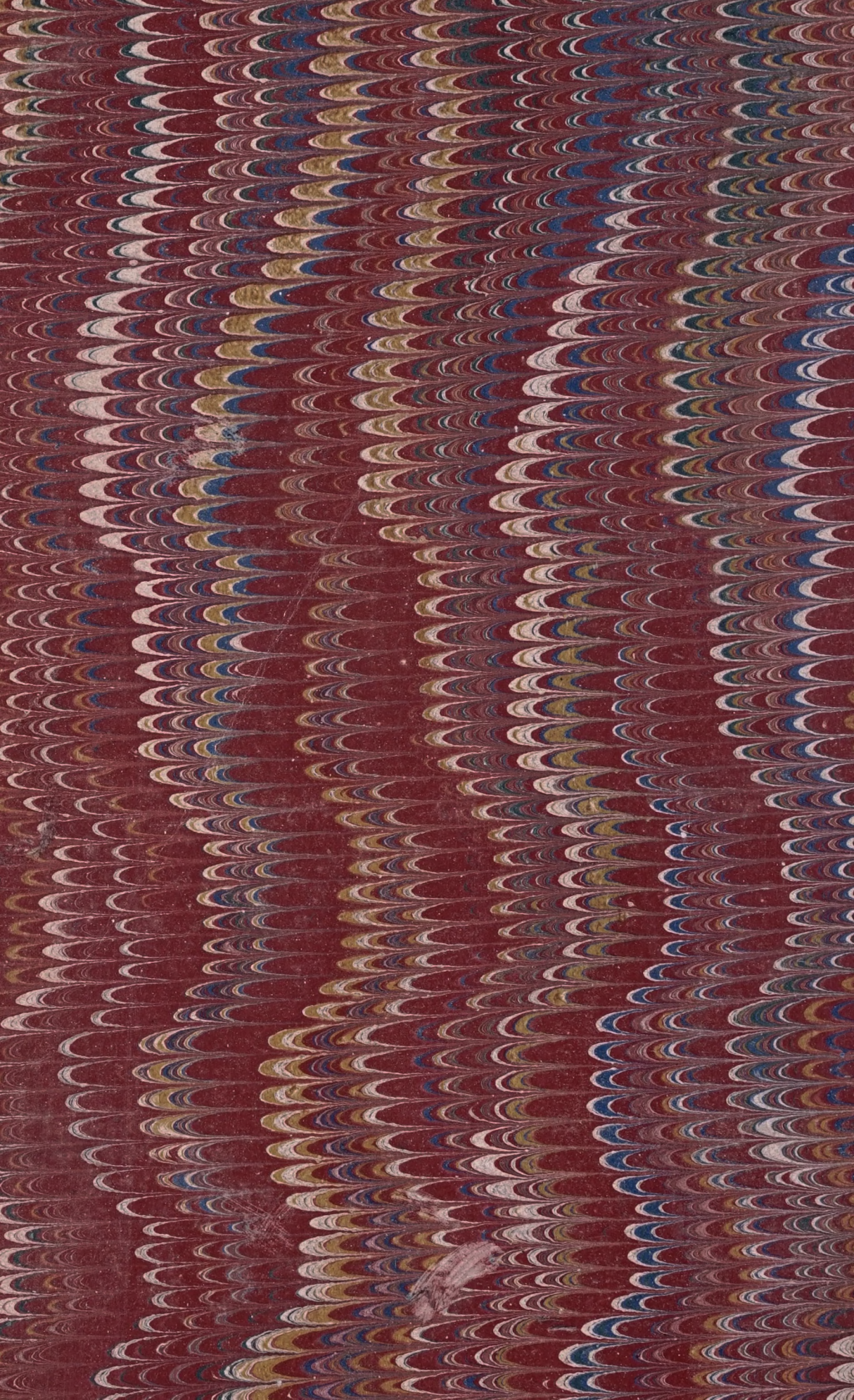
HARPER'S MAGAZINE	Per Year \$4 00
HARPER'S WEEKLY	" 4 00
HARPER'S BAZAR	" 4 00
HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE	" 2 00
HARPER'S FRANKLIN SQUARE LIBRARY (52 Numbers)	" 10 00
HARPER'S HANDY SERIES (52 Numbers) . . .	" 15 00

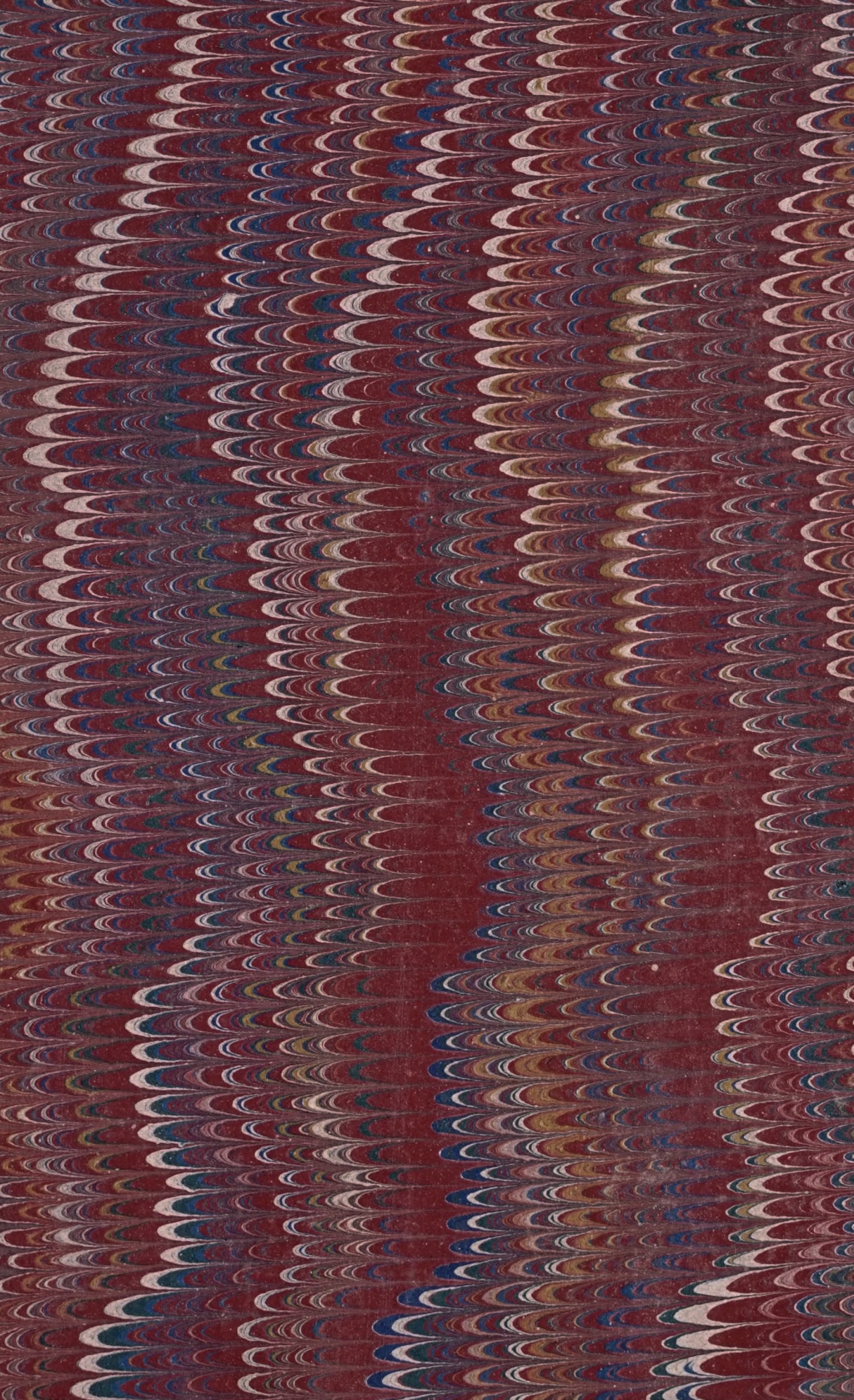
Subscriptions to any of the Periodicals will begin with the Number current at the time of receipt of order, except in cases where the subscriber otherwise directs.

Remittances should be made by Post-Office Money Order or Draft, to avoid risk of loss.

Address,

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022885418

